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THE
CHRIST WE FORGET:

A LIFE OF OUR LORD FOR MEN OF TO-DAY

BY

P. WHITWELL WILSON

"I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me"

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A Gift to my Wife, to Whose Patient and Forbearing Devotion, under Providence, is due Whatever of Faith and Hope and Love may be discoverable in these Pages

Strong Son of God, immortal Love,
Whom we, that have not seen Thy face,
By faith, and faith alone, embrace,
Believing where we cannot prove;

* * * * *

Thou seemest human and divine,
The highest, holiest manhood, Thou:
Our wills are ours, we know not how;
Our wills are ours, to make them Thine.

INTRODUCTION

BEFORE the war, it seemed almost unnecessary to find time for the Bible. Many of us were making money, others were busily earning it. Our children were getting on nicely at school. Certainly there were grave evils, like drink, and bitter social inequalities, and rancorous political quarrels, and reckless extravagances, which gave us uneasy twinges of conscience. But we drifted, in tens, hundreds of thousands, from public worship. We ceased to pray. We quietly laid aside the Bible.

Then—suddenly—we were brought face to face with facts which we had forgotten. One of those facts was Death—another was Pain—another was Hatred—another was National Duty—another was Suspense. We learnt that life is not a game, but a grim, heroic combat between good and evil.

For this crisis, we found that we were unprepared. Men and women fled for refuge, in some cases, to spiritualism, crystal-gazing, and fortune-telling. Pleasure and Romance played their part as comforters. Lives that had been frivolous were consecrated to war work. And there was the growing splendor of national unity and personal sacrifice. Hopes of a better dawn have encouraged us. We are sure that Faith will return.

Yes—but Faith in what? Faith in Whom? In our hearts, we know that we want something far deeper than Treaties and someone far stronger than

Sovereigns and Statesmen. We need a revival—a new birth of life—a resurrection.

How is this to come about? Over and over again, nations have revived by reading the forgotten Bible. It was so even in the reign of old Josiah. And again it was so in Ezra's time. Our Blessed Saviour Himself, when He was on earth, read the Bible and based His teaching and His conduct upon it. So did His Apostles. So did the Reformers, the Puritans, and the Methodists, and so do missionaries the wide world over. Don't worry about clergy and churches. Let them go their own way—at any rate, for the moment. Read and know the Bible, and all else, including public worship, will fall into its place.

Read it with your own eyes. Why *should* you be enslaved any longer by destructive criticisms, usually made in Germany, where, as we now know, the simplest diplomatic document can be perverted and misrepresented by the very scholars who, for thirty years, have dictated unto us our theology? I don't believe, and I never did believe, one-hundredth part of the invertive hypotheses by which the Bible has been surrounded and obscured. By their fruits we know them. Read the Book for yourself, make it your own, set apart the time to do so, and you will find Someone who will be a very present help to you in trouble.

Unless I am mistaken, if you read with perseverance and resolution, you will discover things in the Bible about which you will want to talk to others. That was my own situation, and thus it is that you have these pages. Your difficulties, doubtless, are not mine. I dare say that you know more about the Bible than I do, and that your life has been far more consistent than mine with our Saviour's teaching. But you

cannot owe Him a greater debt, for no debt could be greater, and you may see in these pages how many are the questions which He answers in the Gospels, how near He is to us all if only we will approach Him through the Scriptures, how ready He is to speak to us through His recorded words, how willing to uplift us as He uplifted those who came to Him. As you read these forty-two chapters—which are mere glimpses—you will probably say to yourself: "I could put that much better—why, he has forgotten this and that and the other"—or even: "He is quite mistaken there." Well, be it so. Tell your own story in your own way; it will help you and it will help others. For it is clear that we want somebody to give us what has been called "the sense" of a Bible—that is, an invitation to the Book—in words that may spread from every Free Library—Sunday School—Brotherhood—Mission—Rectory — Manse—in the country—yes, and even throughout the world. We must all long for the time when, once more, this same Jesus who died shall be known again among men, not as a Crucifix merely, or as a Shadow, but in all His fullness of love, of power, of wisdom, of suffering, and of victory. Far, far happier would be both homes and hearts. There would be more laughter amongst us as of children; better pictures; a nobler literature; more wholesome pleasures; and a grand outburst of missionary enterprise.

Well—this book now belongs to you. Take what helps; pardon the rest; and may you find Him who is the Friend of friends.

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THE CHRIST WE FORGET

I

THE BLENDED PICTURE

The Unreported Christ—The Gospels and their Writers—The Fourfold Portrait.

HERE, in my room under the eaves, with my mother's Bible before me, and the clamor of history a mere murmur in the distance, I am to write for those who wish to read, be they young or be they old, this outline of the life of Jesus, the Christ of God. I am to write as one who has, for himself, watched great men and great events, but can recall none so great as He, and what He did. When I think of the men whose names are historic, I realize that JESUS stands alone. What I here present is not a fifth biography of Him, where incidents are set out in order of date, but a portrait, in which many aspects are blended, stroke by stroke and sentence by sentence, until His face, His form, His character are gradually revealed, as on a canvas. Yet He is more than any such picture—for He lives and moves

amongst us, even to-day. And if this book teaches anything, it is that we must see Him, if at all, each for himself.

Two thousand years ago, He came, conquering and to conquer. Think first of His ambitious humility, His kingly and imperial modesty. Go to the British Museum and count the statues of Rameses, how many they are and in how hard a stone. See how every Roman Emperor has his bust. Note the faces of monarchs on coin and postage stamp. Trace the cipher of Louis XIV on window and portal of his chapel at Versailles. How familiar are the moldered features of Napoleon. But the countenance of Christ, which did not see corruption—although instantly recognized by Paul, who never saw Him in the flesh—rose above this world, unrecorded by any sculptor or painter. Not a photograph remains of Him who made the sun. Yet who, of all rulers of men, was as ambitious as He? The potentates of history built cities and destroyed them, changed the names of provinces and lorded it over the map. He claimed the hearts of men. And because He was of no reputation among the classic artists of His day, whose dim frescoes still adorn what is left of pleasure-places, like Pompeii, long desolate, He has since been highly exalted. The reverent brush of supremest genius has labored to reveal the glorious lineaments of the Son of Man. His countenance, faint or clear, is known, as if by instinct, to us all. The crude coloring of the Armenian altarpiece is one with the glowing splendors of Holman Hunt or Rubens, and no artist, whether of the brush, the chisel, the pen, or of daily life, can honestly endeavor to show Him forth without rising nobler from the effort.

The Unreported Christ.

Possibly men's hearts would have been more richly satisfied if, instead of crucifixes, ikons, painted windows, and pictures, there had been a fuller knowledge of Christ's words and deeds. The truth is that the word came first—a creative word, inspiring, at the outset, the heroism of the missionary, and afterwards, the perspective of the builder, the colors of the artist, and the harmonies of the musician. One need only compare a London music-hall with Westminster Abbey—each, mind you, the best of its kind—or the Madonna of a Raphael with the meretricious triumphs of profane art, in order to measure what modern lands would have been, bad though they often are, if the irrepressible genius of mankind had been cut off from the purifying mysticism of the Incarnation. Yet the words of Christ, which have thus determined the fate of civilization, were left, in the first instance, almost, as it would seem, to chance. At a time when Emperors of Rome carved their titles on marble, much as schoolboys cut their names on their desks, and philosophers of Alexandria vainly amassed huge libraries of clay tablets and papyrus, with which in due course the Moslems were to stoke the furnaces beneath the baths of that city, Jesus—so far as we are told—wrote only once, and then on the ground; nor do we know what phrase it was that rid a sinful woman of her pious persecutors, there in the cold portico of the unfeeling Temple. Over and over again, we read of Him teaching, but do not know what He taught. Yet no man who ever spoke better deserved a verbatim report. If Jesus returned to-day, every syllable, as it fell from His lips, would be taken

down in shorthand, translated into a hundred tongues, and flashed, as the news of the day, to the ends of the earth. Each gesture and mannerism would be described with a minuteness derived from admiration, curiosity, or malice; and I like to think of Him as One whose wisdom is unexhausted—a Friend who, when we meet Him, has still new things to say to us.

The historians of Rome, like Dio, ignored Him, and He was content to come without their observation. Knowing the fallibility of man, He yet entrusted His message to the memory of those who loved Him through death. He took no visible precautions to secure what the Speaker of the House of Commons calls "the greater accuracy" of their reminiscences. He applied no critical safeguards. He wished nothing to survive that had not helped someone who needed help. And His confidence in the generation that slew Him was incredibly justified.

The Gospels and their Writers.

Incomparably the most illustrious books ever written in the immortal language of Homer and Æschylus have been neither Homer nor Æschylus, but the colloquial and declassical Gospels. Merely as translated they have become, by consent, the noblest masterpiece of English literature. They are, like Jesus, both human and Divine. On the one hand, He said and did these things. On the other hand, they only come to us in so far as somebody of our own flesh and blood treasured them in his heart and handed them on.

We find the Sermon on the Mount both in St. Matthew and St. Luke. The first report is fuller than

the second, yet the second contains sentences not included in the first. As one who has devoted his life to the task of summarizing speeches, and can speak with a practical experience not possessed by any critical scholar, who spends his time among books, I am entitled to the opinion that these are vivid and nervous accounts, of a real utterance, by a real Teacher—the very variations showing that we have here, not error or carelessness, but the corroboration of more than one witness. And when I am told by German critics that our Lord could not have uttered the discourses set out in the Fourth Gospel, I appeal once more to my own experience. I have been writing some anonymous articles which aroused curiosity. Not only have my friends decided, on internal evidence as it is called, that I did not write them, but I have heard already of one person, of high literary attainments, who does not deny that he is the author. If one considers how literature is actually produced, one becomes profoundly skeptical of what are called the results of modern research. The "proof" is often merely hypothesis, and the hypotheses vary, like the fashions.

Our Lord did not inscribe a Koran, to be learnt by rote and transcribed from parchment to parchment, like some Abracadabra. When He said that we must worship the Father in spirit and in truth, His only audience was an erring Samaritan woman, to whose good faith He trusted with an implicitness which was vindicated by one of the most dramatic and moving dialogues ever incorporated in biography. For this reason, we read the Gospels—not as Wordsworth is read, in selections, because all have been preserved—but as a whole, because all have been sifted, arranged,

and illuminated by gratitude and admiration. John—as he assures us—could have filled the world with books. In the result, he left us less than an advertisement page of the *Times*. We talk of the higher criticism, but no criticism was higher than that of the Evangelists, for the crucible in which they refined their gold, till it was pure as glass, was a crucible, not of scholarship, but of experience. And while there have been innumerable attempts to undermine the authenticity of the Gospels, it is to be noted that in these two thousand years not one alternative biography, based on malice, on superstition, or on skepticism, has replaced them.

The Fourfold Portrait.

The Gospels are like quarterings on the royal escutcheon of the Saviour. In the Book of Revelation we find a resplendent symbol of His glowing coat-of-arms. There we read of the four living creatures: the lion, the lamb, the human face, and the flying eagle, all singing their "Holy, holy, holy," to the Source of their being and ours. These mystical personages, foreshadowed by the poet Isaiah, have their six wings—with twain to cover the face, which is reverence; with twain to cover the feet, which is humility; and with twain to fly, which is service. Reverence, humility, service—these were the characteristics of the biographers, who, writing anonymously, desired no literary rewards, but set down their narratives in crabbed penmanship, as part of their daily work and worship.

In Mark we see the lion-like man—active, untiring, with an imperial energy, and masterful in every impulse. There, at Venice, the Lion of Mark still

stands glorious; and in a greater empire than the Venetian, the lion is the hall-mark of true metal, the exemplar of vigilant courage; massive, not easily stirred, but when aroused, irresistible. Such was the Hero of Judah and Prince of the House of David, General of twelve legions of angels, in whose crowded life the watchword was "immediately."

The lamb—signature of Matthew—does not in nature easily lie down with the lion. But in Christ they are one. The lamb has two qualities of infinite significance: first, a readiness to die while life is still unspent, and, secondly, an utter inability to injure others. When Christ was cut off, He was still in His prime. There is no hint that He ever suffered from mental or physical disease. No one has ever attributed to Him the epilepsy of Mohammed. He was a perfect victim. And He died unresisting. Of His miracles, two only did a hurt. In the first, He taught us that many swine are not worth one man's soul—the swine being to Him that wealth which is contrary to God's law. In the other, it was by withering a fig-tree that, in mercy, He warned a nation drifting to its doom.

In Luke's record, we see the face of a friend—moved by deep, human sympathy. The appeal is there to the best emotion of our race. What *man* of you, having a hundred sheep, will leave the hundredth to perish in the wilderness? What *woman* of you, having ten pieces of silver, will lose the tenth and not search till she find it? What *father,* having two sons, will throw off the younger when he returns, disgraced, from the far country? That is Luke's approach to Christ.

John's is as the flying eagle, who rises far above

earth, and gazes with keen eye right into the eternities. The eagle, which has symbolized the Republic of the West, the daring exploits of Napoleon, the pride and power of Germany and Austria, and the great autocracy of Russia, was first devoted to the blazonry of the Redeemer, nor is there any prestige claimed, whether for despotism or democracy, which was not His first, and will not be His at the last. Yet, summing up as He did, the best in creation—the *sacrifice* not the waywardness of the lamb, the *courage* not the ferocity of the lion, the *wisdom* not the poison of the serpent, so it is the *vision* of the eagle, not the eagle's cruelty, that helps us to understand Him.

Energy, obedience, sympathy, vision—these are what we find in Him. We are invited to approach Him, not from one but from every point of view, and from whatever direction we thus come to Him we shall find that He will in no wise cast us out.

II

THE ANCESTRY OF CHRIST

The Prophets and Christ—Christ the Revealer of God—The Two Genealogies.

WHAT one first notices in the Gospels is the fact that these writers did not look upon our Lord's life as beginning at birth and ending at death, but as eternal, both in time and space, so that before all worlds He was there, and without Him no star or system of stars could have come into being. This was what they thought, not about some distant and secluded saint, but about an intimate personal Companion, with whose voice they were familiar; to whom, with their own hands, they furnished daily food; whose every habit had been disclosed to them. These witnesses, some of them fishermen, one a doctor, another a Pharisee, another a tax-gatherer, agreed that Jesus was one with the Creator, and that whatever multi-myriads of living creatures inhabited worlds unknown, all of them—good or bad—were as it were tested by their attitude to the Man of Nazareth. It was as if the biographers of George Washington had begun their story, not with his birth at Bridges Creek, in Virginia, but with the creation of the Rocky Mountains and the first thunders of

Niagara. He Himself used a phrase like "in the beginning" with a significant familiarity, as of an eye-witness of those operations whereby our life had its origin. "In the beginning," He would say, "it was not so." Ancient as are our divorce laws—to take one illustration—to Him they were innovations. Moses and Abraham, the founders of His country's greatness, were to Him among the moderns.

Constant attempts have been made to belittle these claims, particularly by the assertion that the date of the Gospels allowed an interval during which "the legend" of Christ's majesty was developed by superstitious followers. But the world is ever drawn back to a Personage who with effortless grandeur fills the stage of history; and even the most careless of us realizes, when he gives himself time to think, that if Christ's status be reduced, so is the status of all mankind. Slavery, sweating, injustice, vice—these and every degradation of our race are rebuked in Christ and cannot survive. Once and for all, He challenged Rousseau's despairing dictum, that "man is born free, but is everywhere in chains." He lost His life, but He never surrendered or misused His liberty.

These ideas about Jesus did not begin with the Gospels and Epistles written after His death. We find them in psalms and prophecies which were read in the synagogues regularly centuries before He came. Here was a definite hope, committed to writing long before the event, that a Messiah would one day arise, who should save His people from their sins. No girl in Judea, with womanhood dawning upon her, dreamt of marriage without a prayer that her firstborn might be the Deliverer of Israel. One

asks whether there is any parallel for this intense domestic yet religious patriotism—this wonderful belief in the sacredness of children. And according to their faith was it unto them. Many champions did arise. There were the Maccabees. There was Judas of Galilee, whom Gamaliel mentioned. There was Theudas. There were many Messiahs. Many mothers hoped that their sons would be the Chosen of God. The oblivion which has overwhelmed these comparatively obscure careers is the measure of Christ's unapproachable greatness. For one person who can tell you anything about the Maccabean Wars, there are ten thousand who can tell you much more about the Galilean mission.

The Prophets and Christ.

Prophecies are said to contribute to their own fulfilment. Precisely; that is part of the story. Jesus saturated His mind with the teaching of the Old Testament. By that standard He tested His entire destiny. We might, indeed, almost write His life from the psalms and the prophets. His mother was to be a maiden. He was to be reckoned with the tribe of Judah and the royal house of David. He was to be born in Bethlehem. A massacre of young children was to afflict that famous market-town. He was to visit Egypt. He was to grow up, unprotected, as a tender plant, in a civilization as unhopeful as the dry ground. His personality was to be devoid of the popular graces, and He was to be despised and neglected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Much of His ministry was to be devoted to Zebulun and Naphtali, Galilee of the Gentiles, where the people, sitting in darkness,

were to see a great light. But He was to enter Jerusalem as King, yet lowly and seated on an ass. For He would not strive nor cry, nor lift up His voice in the streets, but would be gentle with men and persuasive, neither breaking the bruised reed nor quenching the smoking flax, until—I like that tremendous *until—until* He sends forth His sword unto victory.

A follower of Elijah, rugged of habit and bold of speech, was to prepare His way, but He Himself was to bear the griefs of men and carry their sorrows, to feed them like a shepherd, to unstop the deaf ears, open the blind eyes, heal the sick, strengthen the lame, and, most mysterious of all sacred functions, carry on His heart and conscience the iniquities of us all. Finally, He was to be mocked, scourged, and killed—a silent and willing victim—not by sword, nor stoning, nor by the gallows, but by some strange and awful martyrdom which would expose His tortured frame to the public gaze—His lips parched with thirst, His hands and His feet cruelly pierced, yet His bones unbroken. After betrayal by one who was to eat with Him from the same dish, He was to share this fate with the wicked, yet was to be buried among the rich, and, after burial, was to see no corruption, but out of defeat was to ride forth to victory, and claim the unbounded allegiance of nations yet unborn! That was what men knew of Him, centuries before His mother first clasped her unconscious Baby to herself.

Christ the Revealer of God.

The one supreme truth which the Jews realized clearly was that God was as much a part of their lives

as a river at which they watered their flocks, a rock under which they sheltered themselves from the sun, or their friends and their enemies. But John, who wrote the fourth of our Lord's biographies, declared that God is more than this. He is not only near to us, and actively concerned in our affairs, but He constantly expresses Himself, as a man utters "a word," so that color and form and movement and sound—in sunset, mountain, and leaf, in running streams and the flight of birds—are the language of God, which we, by our art and our enjoyment, may make our language. So that we draw near to God when we build aisles like the forest glade, and domes like the sky above us, and consider the lilies, how they grow, and note that the very sparrows are unforgotten.

This was the view not only of the Evangelist but of John Ruskin and the pre-Raphaelites, who taught us that all arts are to be tried by their fidelity to God's will in nature. In Jesus, the disclosure of God was more deeply unfolded. The "Word" became actual flesh and dwelt among us. Just as in our own persons, certain hopes, calculations, ideals, ambitions, are, as it were, embodied in our eyes and ears, the gestures of our hands, the progress of our feet—so in Christ the thoughts of God became the life and the light of men. What we call "the incarnation" was not incredible; it was inevitable. It follows from a landscape by Turner, which is not mere paint; from the flash of a diamond, which is not mere charcoal; and from this very print, which is not mere ink. And thus it was that while Matthew traced our Lord's pedigree to Abraham, and Luke carried it back to Adam, John, by his eagle glance, pierces the mists of time, and flashes

out the truth that Jesus and His Father are ONE. The Messiah sprang from the eternal Godhead.

One detects an absorbing significance in those earthly genealogies which are given us by Matthew and Luke—partly because they appear to be irrelevant. Joseph was not Christ's father; he repudiated the paternity; yet it is his ancestry and not Mary's that we find in the Gospels. Doubtless Joseph, warned by a dream, assumed legal responsibility for the Child, and some authorities think that Luke's table of ancestors really represents the family of the Virgin. Be that as it may—and I prefer to go not one inch beyond what is actually stated in the New Testament—it is incontestable that Jesus grew up, one of a family of brothers and sisters, yet Himself under irreverent reflection, owing to the marvelous circumstances attending His coming among men. We remember the difficulties of the other Joseph with his brethren, the domestic jealousies that arose, the criminal intrigues. The only protection of Jesus against the humiliation of what seemed to be the bar sinister—He who had not abhorred the *Virgin's* womb—was His utter goodness, and certain other memories that illuminated His birth.

The Two Genealogies.

These long pedigrees are an illustration of what Paul meant when he wrote about having one's treasure in earthen vessels. Not one of us to-day worships Christ because, according to Matthew, Joseph had royal blood in his veins, while, according to Luke, this royal blood was as ancient as Adam. In the veins of the Hapsburgs and Hohenzollerns there is royal and ancient blood, but to neither dynasty do we pay our homage. The very candor with which Matthew

annotates his genealogy is among the supreme, the inspired ironies of literature. With a sure instinct, he points out every blot on that impoverished yet proud escutcheon. He tells how the sons of Judah, Phares and Zara, were born of Tamar, and were thus of irregular descent. He tells how the mother of Boaz was Rahab, the harlot of Jericho, when Jericho was in the last stages of moral decay. He tells how the grandmother of David was Ruth, the pagan woman of Moab. He tells how Solomon's mother was Bath-sheba, the wife of Uriah, the Hittite. That lineage, according to the flesh, omitted most of the men and women whose genius rendered the Jewish race illustrious. There is no Moses, no Joshua, no Samuel. There is no Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, or Jeremiah. One might almost imagine that it was the purpose of the Evangelists to show how little of worth is included in the most exalted peerage of Israel, and that the hereditary principle, as adopted, let us say, in Islam—where children of the Prophet are still distinguished by the green turban—is not applicable to a saving faith. They teach us that the Spirit, like wind, bloweth where it listeth, on rich and poor, Jew and Gentile, who thus become of one family with Him, and true children of Abraham, when, in all humble obedience, they do the works of Abraham and of Jesus. And they also show that our Saviour came, not only to share the glory of our race, at its best, but to redeem our race from the worst.

Though inaccuracy is not proved, the pedigrees of Matthew and Luke are not identical, either with each other or with certain documents in the Old Testament. At this distance of time, no research can compose the discrepancies—which, I confess, is no difficulty to me,

for I see therein the truth that the God of the Past is and ever will be as unsearchable as the God of the Present and the God of the Future. But the curious arrangement in Matthew, whereby fourteen generations carry us, first from Abraham to David, then from David to the Captivity, and finally from the Captivity to Joseph and our Lord, is indicative of a deep meaning. Seven is the perfect number, and in each period of fourteen selected generations you have successively —first, the perfect evolution of political kingship; secondly, the complete decline of that political kingship and the enslavement of a people destined to be free; and, finally, the perfect preparation for a spiritual kingship, essentially distinct from David's, yet the fulfillment of it. The pedigrees may be in these days of as little account as earthen vessels, yet we are richer with them than without them; because, if we break up these genealogies, as Gideon's soldiers broke their pitchers, we find a lamp within which guides us onward to the truth that, even in the most high-sounding genealogy, there was none righteous, no not one. None righteous, I would repeat, yet, in addition, none hopeless. Tamar and Rahab and Ruth and Bathsheba stand out before us as the immortal examples of the human soul, rising by faith above circumstances, and so fulfilling the dimly understood purposes of God.

There are no further pedigrees in the New Testament, and the liberalizing influence of Christ over minds narrowly cabined and confined by ideas of a privileged heredity is splendidly displayed in Paul's declaration that, beginning life as an Israelite, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews, he counted these advantages but loss, and proclaimed to the Gentiles also a spiritual inheritance the equal of his own.

III

MARY, THE VIRGIN MOTHER

The Annunciation—Mary and Christ—A Mother's Influence.

THOUSANDS of artists have painted their pictures of the Virgin Mary, and, after much labor for many days, I would add mine, a faint impression in mere words. Of the legends that have gathered around this Most Blessed of Women, I am content with one, that she was ever dressed in natural colors, for so we find her in the composite portrait which appears in the Gospels. Joseph's pedigrees were as stiff as parchment, but the royal ancestry of Mary is only hinted at—in the Prophets, the message of Gabriel, her own song of gratitude, and Paul's letter to the Romans—while as to her birth and death Scripture is silent. We see her simply as a maiden of Nazareth—that turbulent little village which still clings to the water-worn crags of limestone, whence gushes Mary's well—and she crosses the stage like Melchizedek, King and Priest of Salem, who was without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life. As a girl, a mother, a wife, and a widow—the four conditions of womanhood—Mary was the long-awaited daughter of Eve, the eternal vindicator of her

sex, whose seed was to bruise the serpent's head and dispel the shame of our race.

This peasant-princess was devoid of what is called genius. She was no Esther, destined by her beauty to sway an Eastern court. On one occasion only was she a poetess, and her song was in part a paraphrase of Hannah's. Elizabeth of Hungary was a woman of sincere piety, but her saintliness turned to tragedy, and even Joan of Arc lived too much on visions. But Mary's temperament was normal. She was as orderly, as sensible, and as capable as Florence Nightingale. She did not prophesy. She did not preach. She suffered no martyrdom. In her home there was a steady discipline and every wholesome interest. Her vocation was housekeeping, and she adorned it.

The Annunciation.

One cannot imagine a girl less likely to be deluded into thinking that the Angel Gabriel had visited her. Of that scene she is, perforce, the only witness, but her evidence has stood two thousand years of cross-examination; and when I read her story, so candid and simple, I cannot believe her capable of defending her innocence against suspicion by putting forward so tremendous a blasphemy as a fabricated Annunciation. We have not one account of her only, but four. She was watched from every side. She lived in a village, where slander is ruthless. Some incident in her record, some word, some look, some betrayal, would assuredly have dispelled any unreal miracle. I sometimes think that if births did not occur amongst us hourly, science would prove that birth is incredible. The Virgin Birth is not more wonderful than yours

or mine,—this, I am told is the view even of the scientists who criticize,—yet as a miracle it stands alone; for, in coming to Christ, we must learn at the outset that, as the Angel Gabriel expressed it, "with God nothing is impossible." Essentially, Christ's birth was different from ours. He was born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but as a gift from God, unsought and undeserved and free—and in one of His earliest recorded utterances He tells us that our souls must be born again, like that.

Painters show us the Annunciation as a flash of golden light, descending on Mary, as she knelt in her quiet and simply arranged chamber. What actually happened was no such spectacle. The Angel Gabriel, glorious with the radiance of heavenly service, spoke to her: she listened, she answered, and the Spirit of God came upon her. Mary displayed neither doubt nor fear; and her surprise was not at the Angel; for, as John learnt when he witnessed the glories of heaven, angels are bound with us to one common obedience. But the Angel's salutation, his salutation to her,—this it was that perplexed her, for his words were like no other greeting that she had ever heard. For what reason was she, in her obscure station in life, to be highly favored among women? She did not speak, but the Angel reassured her, with the yet more tremendous news that she should bear a son. Then, indeed, as a maiden of stainless integrity, she was entitled to put a question, direct and unmistakable, as from an equal to an equal. No girl, betrothed as she was to an honorable and upright man, could have done otherwise—and it mattered nothing that, while she was only a village maiden, Gabriel was a

favored prince of heaven. She had her answer, brief, explicit, and sufficient; and when she heard it, she added not one word about her own emotions, but submitted herself to God. To me, the employment of an Angel as ambassador to Mary arouses no astonishment; it was surely most fitting, for I look in vain for a man or woman to whom—in fairness to the maiden—the mission could have been entrusted. Mary gave way to no light-headed elation. She did not boast or put forward pretensions. Her visit to Elizabeth was in precise accord with the Angel's kindly hint. Nor when she saw her cousin was she first with her news. It was Elizabeth who welcomed her as the mother of her Lord. It was the unborn John who leapt at the approach of the unborn Jesus. Mary magnified not herself, but her God.

Mary and Christ.

The Virgin was a woman of quick decision, of unhesitating impulse. With what haste she hurried to her cousin Elizabeth—with what personal courage, though hoping to be a mother, she accompanied Joseph when he went to be enrolled at Bethlehem, the city of David! Sometimes her intensely practical mind failed to appreciate Christ's love for the soul. She it was, and not Joseph, who sharply chided her Boy, then twelve years old, because He had spent three days in Jerusalem, and caused much domestic inconvenience, by questioning learned men about things eternal. At the Marriage Feast, what chiefly concerned her was the shortage of mere wine. And, at the climax of our Lord's ministry, she was almost persuaded by her other children that her eldest Son had, after all, lost His reason. Yet the faith of these

mothers in Israel was truly astonishing. Elizabeth, in her address to Mary, never doubted that God had really spoken to the two of them, or that there would be "a performance" of what He said. The burdens of maternity were made radiant with spontaneous psalms.

There was no estrangement between our Lord and His mother. When, in the Temple, Jesus answered her, with something of her own directness, the very form of His rebuke drew them together. Mary alone knew all that He meant when He said that He must be about His Father's business. At Cana, it may have been only the wine that caused her worry; but, again, she understood perfectly what was in her Son's mind when He told her that His "hour" was not yet come. Although He had then performed no miracle, she and she alone believed that miracles would be seen, and—this being her faith, after a life of intimacy with Him—she told the servants to obey Jesus in all that He said to them. As our Lord's career was unfolded, Mary, realizing that He must shape it in His own way, ceased to assert herself, but was ever with Him, even at the Cross. There, with exquisite economy of words—for these two needed no explanations—He resigned her, weeping, to the care of His most beloved of followers, thus planning a home for her, when all the world's sin weighed Him down to death. By that crushing blow she was not overwhelmed. The Virgin, whose own honor had been assailed thirty-three years before, whose ruin had been almost decreed, shared with her Son a great tenderness for women accused of evil. She did not criticize His goodness to publicans and sinners, but chose the Magdalene, out of whom

He cast seven devils, to be her companion at the Cross. By sending her away with John, our Lord made it clear that she was in no way associated with His atoning work; and when He ascended, we leave her still among His friends, praying with them, which, despite all later teaching, was her only "rapture," her sufficient "coronation."

A Mother's Influence.

To her illustrious Son she gave her best, transmitting to Him in full measure the native vigor of her strong character. Jesus was brought up as a gentleman, considerate of others, yet able to rebuke all liberties. Simon the Pharisee might be rich, and our Lord longed to win his heart; but Simon must not forget the usual courtesies of a host, merely because Jesus was a missionary without private means. Like His mother, our Lord insisted on things being done right. The thousands must be fed, but they must sit in ranks, there must be no scramble, and scrupulous care must be taken to avoid waste. Her very flash of anger against Him when He was a Boy is, as it were, reflected back in that astounding capacity for indignation which enabled Him, in His turn, to clear the Temple of money-changers, confound the scribes and Pharisees with His terrible rhetoric, and cow His accusers with a glance. Yet in His public work He never consulted her; nor did she once, like the mother of Zebedee's children, use her position to seek from Him a blessing, whether for her own sons or anyone else. We left her praying with the disciples, not receiving their prayers, nor is there the slightest hint that she ever aspired to Christ's special majesty, or now approaches Him on our behalf with inter-

cessions. St. John was the Apostle to whose care she was committed by her dying Son, yet in that Book of the Revelation which bears his name, and describes heaven opened, there is no mention of the Virgin Mary—let alone of the Virgin enthroned.

Her name is with us, as in her own day, one of the commonest—a name shared by maid-servants with queens. It is the same as Miriam, who was sister of Moses, and it means "revolt"—one had almost said "militancy." The first Miriam—born a slave under that Egyptian terror which did not spare the infants—was devoted from birth to the desperate hope of liberation. Mary, bred under the yoke of Rome, was not less inspired by a passion for freedom. What flamed through her memory was Hannah's defiance of the proud—her passionate belief that God would humble the princes on their throne and exalt them of low degree. But in Mary's song there is a more personal note, a gentler melody, as if oppression were not only by princes and the proud and the rich, but were a more intimate affair, only to be resisted through "God, my Saviour."

Since the period of the Nestorians there has been a tendency to fortify the Incarnation by attributing Divine honors to the Lord's mother. Anyone who, in one of our museums, looks at a later Buddhist shrine, will there find a statue of the Queen of Heaven which is, at first glance, indistinguishable from a Roman Catholic image of the Blessed Virgin. Mary of Nazareth was no such abstraction. Let us think of her, not as a pale and cloistered nun, but as she was painted with broad and human brush by Raphael, in whom were blended the reverence of the Middle Ages and the freedom of the Renaissance. He shows

us Mary as a real sister to every woman, unencumbered by any crown save her hair; needing no throne, since she treads the earth itself; breathing our wholesome air, clad in a generous robe, her cloak sweeping with majestic grandeur above her head, and clouds of doubt and trouble rolling slowly from her feet. Her Child is no weakling babe, but a fine and healthy Boy who surveys the universe with steady eyes, as if He were able, thus young, to leave His strong mother's overweighted arms; and those roguish cherubs, leaning their chubby cheeks on their fat little hands, smile gaily, knowing well that a Friend has come at last, who will make things happier for children.

IV

THE FIRST CHRISTMAS

Bethlehem of Judea—"Lying in a Manger"—Christ within.

THERE was once a man, called the excellent Theophilus, who thought that it was important to know at what precise hour, of what day, of what year, our Lord was born, and on what other precise date He began His public ministry. For his sake, Luke, the beloved physician, put into his Gospel quite a number of hints about Herod the Great, and Tiberias Cæsar, and Pontius Pilate, governor of Judea, and the other Herod, Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip, tetrarch of Ituræa and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias, the tetrarch of Abilene, with Annas and Caiaphas, the high priests. But, despite this carefulness to set things in their chronological order, for the sake of Theophilus, who evidently thought that emperors and tetrarchs were very illustrious personages, we do not and perhaps never shall know the precise date of our Lord's nativity. His coming was unmarked by clocks and calendars, and the death of Herod is an event more precisely dated. The birthday of Jesus is celebrated a fortnight earlier in the West than in the East, and it is certain that the Christian era did not begin with

Anno Domini One. The world took little account of Him with whom a thousand years are but as one day.

Yet this unobserved nativity is now honored more widely than any other festival. Indeed, it has become, for society and commerce, a season as unchallengeable as the tides.

Of the eminent personages mentioned to the excellent Theophilus, not one now interests mankind. We only remember the birthday of Herod Antipas because it was the occasion of a wicked murder. But if you were to abolish the birthday of Christ, you would inflict on mere trade a loss only to be reckoned in hundreds of millions sterling.

Bethlehem of Judea.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem, "the House of Bread," the granary of the promised land, where Ruth, the stranger, gleaned the golden corn that was without money and without price, and David refused to drink from the everlasting well the water for which brave men jeopardized their life's blood. Bethlehem was the home of the boy who, defending his sheep from the lion and the bear, could sing that the Lord was his shepherd; and, by remembering Bethlehem, we understand how it was that our Lord also became the Good Shepherd who resisted the thieves and the robbers, and offered Himself as the daily Bread of Life, promising to us, at the cost of His heart's blood, a well of living water, ever springing up within us unto everlasting life. He loved the traditions of His birthplace, and thought less of David's bloodstained crown—which, indeed, He never mentioned except to refuse it—than of David's belief in God's care, which

led him, when a fugitive, to take the shewbread itself.

What brought the unborn Messiah to Bethlehem was a Roman census, the claim of Cæsar from which none of us can escape—a claim not to bless but to burden, not to give but to tax, not to help but to govern, not to save but to slay—which claim was yet overruled for our salvation. To Cæsar, the world consists of rich people and poor people, who may be made liable for tribute money and possibly for military service; but in our Lord's more searching census—the Lamb's Book of Life that is never out of date—the hungry and the thirsty are enrolled, the pure in heart, the heavy-laden, and the martyrs. The Roman census left Jesus without a home or protection. It did not matter to the Emperor what became of Him or of any other baby, and He nearly fell a victim to a massacre more ruthless even than the mortality of infants that has continued ever since.

The Holy Family went to the inn. In the olden days, Bethlehem had been a place where a lonely Moabitish widow, like Ruth, was secure from insult and want; but the hospitality by which good men sometimes entertained angels unawares had decayed, and Joseph must needs make his way to a public *khan*. Ingenious people suggest that this *khan* was the very house of Boaz which, they say, was the homestead that David granted to Chimham, the son of that generous friend in distress, Barzillai the Gileadite, and that afterwards became the caravanserai from which the reluctant Jeremiah set forth with the Jews who sought exile in Egypt. If the inn of Bethlehem was really the farmhouse of Boaz, then it follows that Jesus was turned away from His ancestral home, and

denied even a cradle in His own patrimony. Certain it is that almost the only inn mentioned, either in Old or New Testament, was this inn at Bethlehem, and that in Jeremiah the reference is curiously exact.

Jesus did not forget that when He was born He had nowhere to lay His head. Possibly He foresaw that there never would be much room for Him in an inn, whether ancient or modern; for when He sent forth His disciples on their mission, He did not tell them to book a bedroom at an hotel, but directed them to seek out the old-time hospitality on which Elijah and Elisha depended. So far as we know, He never slept in an inn, but visited homes like that of Martha and her sister Mary, which was also the practice of Paul on his journeys. The very existence of the modern hotel is a symptom that the home has failed; and if our homes were what they should be, there would be less need for restaurants and public-houses. When the perfect city is built, there will be no tavern therein, but many mansions, where every traveler may freely find a place that he can call his own.

In the meantime, He tells us that it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for those cities which deny hospitality to those who come in His name. And in the parable of the Good Samaritan the condemnation of Jericho lay precisely in this—that the wounded traveler had to be accommodated, not in a freely offered home, but in the inn, at twopence a day, with further payment for any extra expenses. If we only lend to those who are sure to repay, then Jesus asks us, What thank have we? The Gentiles, who make no profession of religion, do that. And if we invite to our dinner-parties only those who will ask us in return,

once more, What thank have we? Neglected Himself, it is for the neglected that He thus pleads.

"Lying in a Manger."

The stable has disappeared, only to be modernized, so that for Italy it becomes an Italian scene, and for Flanders a bit of the Flemish. The Ancient of Days thus rises amongst us clad in our own garments and influencing our own customs. Doubtless the stable was a humble refuge, but at least it was not a cage nor a jungle. As that quiet painter, Sidney Cooper, knew so well, the animal life of a stable is disciplined and obedient, lacking entirely the tiger-like ferocity of lust or the snakish uncleanliness of vice. This was why the angels could sing of glory to God in the highest when God's glory lay among the cattle, for it is not the hard and dirty hand, but the hard and dirty heart, that, like the wild beasts in the desert, leaves Christ an hungered and alone with the Devil. Ever mindful of His birth among the oxen, He was the friend of those that labor and are heavy-laden, and would give them rest. He would make their yoke easy and their burden light. And He began life by trusting Himself entirely to those who work humbly for their humble living.

Let us look at Him as He lay in the manger. There was no halo about His head, nor miracle other than the miracle of His babyhood. The inn filled and emptied, as travelers, knowing nothing of the Saviour close by, came and went. It might have been your own little babe in his cot, the one you love—possibly the one you lost; yet on that delicate and helpless shoulder rested, as Isaiah foresaw, not the consolation merely, nor the salvation, but the *government* of the

universe. I have been reading of a Buddhist "incarnation" in which an old man was born with a white beard and wise speech. Jesus began life with no language but a cry, yet He was wiser than the aged, since His was the science of the nursery; not statecraft, nor trigonometry, nor *Kultur,* but love, joy, peace, and trust, expressed in order, cleanliness, natural instincts, and method. As a little Child He leads us.

Christ within.

Good men who ponder over these things tell us that, somehow or other, we ourselves are intimately concerned in this birth of Christ. William Shakespeare was a gift from God to the human race, but we do not read of anyone suggesting that William Shakespeare should dwell in men's hearts. Indeed, if we all tried to be bards of Avon, we should encounter stranger calamities even than those with which our foolish and wicked Europe is to-day chastened. Yet from the days of the first Christians onwards such language has been constantly applied to Jesus, and without any sense of unreality:

> Though Christ a thousand times in Bethlehem be born,
> If He's not born in *thee,* thy soul is still forlorn.

The man who wrote those lines was Johann Scheffler, a Protestant physician, of philosophical mind, who turned Roman Catholic. At Clare College, Cambridge, there was once a learned person, called Ralph Cudworth, who also held that "the great mystery of the Gospel, the very pith and kernel of it, consists of Christ formed in our hearts." Again, we have Isaac Williams, the Tractarian, who expressed the belief thus:

Within us, Babe divine,
Be born, and make us Thine.

. . . .

Be born, and make *our* hearts
Thy cradle and Thy shrine.

The cloud of witnesses includes John Keble, who spoke of our Saviour as:

On the bosom laid
Of a pure virgin mind.

While in his herald hymn, Charles Wesley, the Methodist, sang of Jesus, "formed in each believing heart." The Christmas Collect in the Episcopal Prayer Book refers to us as "regenerate," which is simply a Latin word for "born again." And I like to think that Charles Dickens, the novelist, agrees with those grave Puritan divines. He did not write a Christmas Collect but a Christmas Carol, in which he told how miserly and hard-fisted Scrooge repented of the evil that he had done and began "an altered life." In his relief, he was "as light as a feather, as happy as an angel, as merry as a schoolboy, as giddy as a drunken man"; and if his behavior was a little unconventional, so also was that of the lame man leaping as an hart.

Even in fiction, we are thus taught what changes are wrought in us by the birth of the Saviour amid the dull animal routine of our dumb brute existence.

It is perhaps to be noted that, even when they suggested, years later, that His birthplace was Nazareth, He did not once correct their error by mentioning Bethlehem. It was not and is not His custom to assist us by special revelation in matters where a little inquiry on our part, with the brains that God has given us, would bring us at once to the

facts. And in truth Bethlehem is now no longer His special birthplace. Wherever hearts are willing, there is He born; wherever He is cherished, there is His cradle; wherever He is reverenced, there is He wrapt tenderly in swaddling clothes and held to the hearts of men.

V

THE FIRST REJECTION

The Angel Mission—The Homage of Science—Anna, the Widow.

WHEN Jesus lay in His mother's arms, the rich world, with its burden of sickness and slavery, was as restless as a hungry child. Down the sunset of that dying era slanted three rays of declining glory, of which the first was Greece, with her arts; the second Rome, with her laws; and the third Israel, with her religion: while the gloom of selfishness, creeping slowly over the landscape, threw hideous shadows of grosser evils. Then arose the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings, and blended again these diverse colors, and so shone forth as the Day-Light of the World, by which we may now walk in safety.

In Him, the Arts have awakened in truth and beauty; in Him, Law and Love, Justice and Mercy are reconciled by Sacrifice; in Him, Religion is cleansed of Superstition, Prejudice, Pride, and becomes the reverent worship of our Father, by His grateful children. Forget Him, and Art, Law, Religion, die and harden in decay, until He is remembered once more.

The people who came to Him first could not read about Him as we can, in Testaments, or follow His

works through the long vista of two thousand years. Even of those who saw Him during His ministry, most only caught one glimpse of Him, and heard a sentence or two of what He said. Hence we find that some of His contemporaries, less fortunate than we are, had to be helped by dreams and visions of angels and by special providences. Joseph was a good man, who could not think for Jesus, but could only work for Him; and as his philosophy did not include the Incarnation, he had to be taught in his sleep what he might have learnt from Isaiah about the Virgin Mother. It was a dream that saved Mary's good name, a dream that led the Holy Family to Egypt, a dream that brought them thence, and a dream that hindered a second flight by directing Joseph into Galilee. That God claims man's every thought, both night and day, is very true, but we do not read that Jesus ever depended for guidance upon dreams. If He was in doubt, He won His wisdom by hard prayer, which was His method of setting us free from necromancy, spiritualism, and every other delusion. He taught us, what science confirms, that dreamless sleep is best; and when He slumbered on a pillow in the stern of a fishing-boat, no storm could arouse Him. To the first Joseph, who went into Egypt, dreams were as worship; to the Wise Men, to Pilate's wife, and to the second Joseph they were merely warnings; and this last of inspired dreamers fades from our vision without uttering one word of unaided testimony to the greatness of Jesus. When he visited Egypt, we do not hear that he made a single convert. Nor did he take one step to secure the advancement of Christ's career in the world.

The Angel Mission.

Here, then, we see the angels hurrying, as it were, with a resplendent rivalry, to tell their news to the shepherds, so that when one spoke—the first of missionaries—it was in breathless phrase, as if, panting, he had outflown the others. "Behold"—he cried —"a Saviour—born to you—this day—in the City of David—Christ the Lord!" What an eager message—not one syllable wasted! Born, be it noted, to you —not to Pharisees or Herodians or Zealots, whose brains are full of their own schemes, but to those who quietly fulfill their duty and then rest content. The shepherds had no idea how close Jesus had drawn to them; and it seems as if the angels, by singing to them instead of to the Babe, were filled with dread lest some humble heart, so ready to worship Him, should fail by inadvertence of the opportunity.

Those angels who welcomed Jesus never left Him. As He went about His work, He was conscious of them, ascending from Him and descending. In the wilderness, angels ministered to Him, when men neglected Him. In the garden, an angel strengthened Him, when His friends fell asleep. Twelve legions of them, more loyal than Israel's twelve tribes, were ever at His service, and by His empty tomb angels stood sentinel. He tells us that every child has his guardian angel, standing before the face of God; that the angels rejoice over every sinner who repents; that they bore Lazarus to Abraham's bosom; and that at the last day they will gather in the harvest of souls, separating the good from the bad. When, therefore, He sweeps away the polytheism of Greece and Rome and all other idolatry, He does not leave heaven

vacant. He tells us, not of gods to be worshiped, not of saints who demand our prayers, but of spirits, glorious with the zeal of obedience, who surround God's throne with praise and service.

And what was to be the sign for the shepherds? A miracle? Not at all. They were to know Him because they would find Him in the manger, the place of their daily employment. He was to be wrapped, not in a lace robe, but, like their own children, in swaddling clothes. It was this sense, that He belonged to their class, which quickened their footsteps and filled them with delight. There was no manger in Bethlehem that they could not find, for they knew of them all.

The angel solo was echoed by an angel chorus, and one would have thought that a multitude, thus bright-winged, would have won the world. It was not so. They did not even win the shepherds, who, having hastened to the Saviour, left Him as speedily—poor and unprotected; nor do we read of one apostle or one martyr arising from the sheepfolds of Bethlehem. No church was there founded; and when Mary desired an offering for the Temple, she could afford no lamb from those flocks which fed around the City of David, but only two young pigeons. The Wise Men had not yet come, with their wealth; and the shepherds, with their sheep, went away without leaving a gift. The seed was sown in their hearts, as on shallow ground; and though it sprang up quickly, because it had no deepness of earth, it withered away. Yet their worship served a purpose which they themselves little suspected. In those early days, the faith most severely tested was that of Mary, the mother of our Lord. Her heart absorbed the shepherds' story

as the thirsty field receives the welcome rain. She did not ask for signs, but she was not left without them.

The angel message was: "Peace on earth and good-will to men." Peace there was, for Jesus lived during one of the few silences in the Roman world when the Temple of Janus was closed. We read in the New Testament of soldiers and robbers, but not of battles; and at no time was the ministry, whether of the Baptist, of Christ, or of His Apostles, interrupted by military operations. The only blood then shed was His blood and the blood of His chosen, so that men had every chance of hearing Him, and were not engulfed again in slaughter until they had made away with Him—the Prince of Peace.

From that day to this wars have raged. And now, after all these centuries of wrong, fallen are the spires whence rang out the angel-music, and melted down to dull cannon are the once happy bells of stricken towns in Europe. The very name "Emmanuel," or "God with us," which belongs by sole prophetic right to Jesus, has been graven, large and blasphemous, on every Prussian helmet, as if God's presence among men, and His peace which passeth all understanding, could be claimed and enjoyed where the Son of God is dishonored. "Emmanuel" occurs once only in the New Testament, in the opening chapter of Matthew, when Jesus, still unborn, might have been a welcome Guest. From His earliest breath His Divinity was denied, and somehow the word "Emmanuel" fell into disuse, as if God could not dwell with nations except upon terms of unchallenged sovereignty over kings and peoples. War does not mean that the Prince of Peace has failed. It means that, in time of peace, the

Prince is forgotten, and if peace be again granted to the children of men, woe to our race if better use be not made of it.

The Homage of Science.

The learned men who gazed at the stars were farther from Jesus than the shepherds who watched their sheep, but they also found Him in their life-work. By their education they were enabled to persevere and inquire and reason it out, until they saw Him clearly; and the very fact that they asked of Herod where the Christ should be born is the first spontaneous homage of an exact science to revelation. We are not told what the star was: it may have been Halley's Comet, or it may have been a conjunction of the planets Jupiter, Saturn, and Mars; but, on either assumption or any other, it seemed as if the heavens must needs declare the glory which earth, including Jerusalem, denied. Where the children of men were silent, the very stones—for what are stars but stones—cried out. The Wise Men approached Jesus with a grave and symbolic ceremony, bringing gifts of their best—gold for His royalty, frankincense for His divinity, and myrrh for His mortality, as if they knew that here was a King who was God and yet must die. We do not again hear of their presents, for Jesus desired no earthly regalia, and the alabaster box which gave Him joy was a broken one. What was offered to Him for display was used doubtless to supply the needs that would arise before Joseph could return to his workshop in Nazareth. Like the shepherds, these Wise Men departed—not one stayed by His side—all, all are lost in the dim mists of the East, and Jesus, no longer attended by stars and angels, was left

once more with Joseph and Mary. It was like the last leave-taking, as He turned the corner of the road, from His home in heaven to the earth beneath.

When He was taken to the Temple, the priests—though warned, as we shall see, by Zacharias—were indifferent, and left the welcome to two of the old folks, not of the sacerdotal caste, who were His only courtiers. As John the Baptist was the last of the prophets, so Simeon was the last of the psalmists, and his slumber-song over the Saviour was a farewell. Like the shepherds and the Wise Men, he also was content to see God's salvation and depart in peace. Of his utterance, since echoed by uncounted millions, Mary and Joseph were the only known auditors, and with this swan-song psalmody ceased; but only to break forth again in hymns of the Christian Church, which are the heritage of every nation. Simeon's words seemed marvelous to those whose eyes were fixed on the wee infant in his arms. To think that such a Babe should be thrust as a rock across the highway of history, over which nations should rise and fall! Simeon spoke as he did before the event; our foresight is negligible, because we merely note the fulfillment. And he saw in an instant that the sword would pierce the heart of Mary herself. It seems as if he saw it in her eyes. This wise old man had not lived his long life in the Jerusalem of Herod the Great without learning what is the custom of an advanced civilization towards the sons of such mothers.

Anna, the Widow.

Simeon's predestination was conscious; he knew that he would see Christ ere he died. Anna came in at that moment as if by chance. But the reason

why she came in was that she constantly visited the Temple. Her surprise was the reward of a habit. Her tribe of Asher was still scattered, but Anna clung to her moorings. Widowed after only seven years as a wife, she had for eighty-four years found comfort in service, and, though a centenarian, she had still energy to tell others of the Messiah. Her father, Phanuel, was remembered in Jerusalem, and Anna was well known; but we do not read that either she or Simeon—though their witness was clear enough—gained one disciple. The Christ as a Hope, an Ideal not yet realizable, did not capture Jerusalem, and Jesus left the city as poor and lonely as He entered it. No one thought of offering Him the advantages of education which Paul enjoyed. There was no scholarship or bursary for Him. Yet how He would have seized such an opportunity we may realize by remembering with what zest He spent three days, when a boy of twelve, questioning and replying to the doctors. In face of that eager aptitude for learning, a carpenter's bench was the only University open to the Saviour.

Jesus was brought back to Bethlehem, and oblivion. He had not then one follower. He was not to win men easily by reposing innocently in a manger, but by infinite patience and suffering. When He was a Babe, men had the great chance of showing their love to Him, ere He could show His love to them. He was weak—they were strong. He was poor—they were rich. He was dumb—they could speak. He was childlike—they had the knowledge. But when they were called to Him, they went their own way, as if something more than a cradle were wanted, if their devotion was to be won.

The day came when He left the swaddling clothes

behind, and with them the seamless robe, and was exposed on a cross of wood, not to worshiping shepherds and magi, but to shame and ribaldry and insult. Then and only then did it dawn on the world —and oh, how slowly—that, if we love Him, it is only because HE FIRST LOVED US.

VI

JOHN, THE FORERUNNER

The Last of the Ascetics—Temple and Synagogue—Priests and Rabbis.

OF all the friends who helped Jesus when He lived among us, John the Baptist alone looms large on the pages of prophecy. Isaiah, brooding over the too familiar spectacle of a Babylonian despot, crossing the desert by a prepared highway, asked himself how the glory of the Lord is to be revealed amidst this wilderness of barren ideals, unless some forerunner—some faithful pioneer—levels up the ravines of low impulses, humbles the mountains of pride, straightens the crooked places of deceit, and smooths the rough places of anger and malice and all uncharitableness. The path of the Messiah must be as even as justice, as direct as sincerity, and as gentle as mercy. So must a voice cry—not a voice with a sword added, which, as Mohammed thought, might conquer the soul through the body; but a voice alone,—the appeal of man to man's undying spirit, which demands of us all, by universal suffrage, to vote what Carlyle called the everlasting Yea or No. For behind the voice lies the mouth of the Lord, speaking; and if our ears be closed, other messages,

not of persuasion and warning, but of thunder and battle, will, as Jerusalem discovered, enforce our attention, however unwillingly. One way or the other, men must learn that without justice, sincerity, and mercy there can be no Princedom of Peace.

This was Isaiah's message to a captive Israel, and years later, with Jerusalem restored, there came another prophet, who caught a nearer glimpse of the forerunner. Watching, as he did, that once-holy city, Malachi—"the messenger"—was himself disillusioned. The man who would bring these people to their senses, so he thought, must be no less than another Elijah, untainted by temple and market-place, cut off from home itself. Only such a man could turn the hearts of the children back to the wisdom of their fathers, and so avert from mankind the smiting curse of God. In our Bibles we read these words; turn the page, and find ourselves at once in the New Testament. But, in fact, it was not so. For generations Malachi's prophecy remained unfulfilled, yet unforgotten. It was as if Wycliffe in the fourteenth century had foretold a Wesley in the eighteenth, and had, in the long interval, maintained England in a state of expectancy. The people knew that they needed one who should deal faithfully with their shortcomings, and this was why, despite John's severity, there were many who rejoiced at his birth. Now, at last, so they said to themselves, the wrongs will be righted.

The Last of the Ascetics.

The outline of a man, which Malachi descried on the horizon of his hopes, assumed, under Gabriel's still nearer vision, both body and shape. From his

birth, John must be a Nazarite. His solution for all life's problems was to be total abstinence. He would avoid the social grape. Yet where Elijah had been a mere Tishbite, John was to be born a priest, with a right to a priest's portion of the people's offerings. But he was to disendow himself, and subsist on food which—be it bitter as the locust or sweet as the honeycomb—was to be won by his own hard hands. Independent of commerce, he made his clothing of camel's hair and was content with a girdle of skin, traveling barefoot, and not even conceding to civilization the use of the razor. John was thus the last and the greatest of the ascetics; and if self-suppression, if monasticism and the anchorite's cell, could have saved the world, John would have done it. Where he failed was that his life was a rebuke to men, not an example that they could follow. In him, the vows of monk and nun were for ever fulfilled; and when he died, Jesus founded no religious order to perpetuate his lonely heroism. Evil as is the world, He prayed not that His disciples should be removed from the world, but that, remaining in the world, as lights and cities of refuge, they should be kept from the evil. He loved John the Baptist, defended him, and mourned for him, but He never held him up to us for imitation.

John's father, Zacharias, was priest of the order of Abiah, and his mother, Elizabeth, was a daughter of Aaron. Sacerdotal succession could be carried no further. His parents are the type for all time of that godliness which prays and hopes and yearns, but remains childless, as if unable to hand on to others the tradition of their own piety. Zacharias would have disapproved of any new theologian who denied the existence of angels. But when Gabriel appeared to

him, he was not glad, like Stephen who saw the heavens opened; or calm, like Peter who was delivered by an angel from prison. The old priest loved his religion as tenderly as he loved his wife, yet felt that both were past the age of bearing fruit. And the idea that his child should be the revolutionary herald of a new era filled him with a doubt which, possibly, he mistook for reverence, yet it left him dumb before the people who needed his blessing. A punishment was inflicted on him. The angel commanded him to give his boy a new name, not Zacharias, nor yet a name reminiscent of the family, but John, meaning *a gift* fresh from the heart of God. What it cost the parents to accept this trial, only a Jew, bred in an intensely hereditary atmosphere, can appreciate; but Zacharias, unable to speak, resisted the pressure of his friends, and put his obedience into writing. And I like to think that what saved him at this crisis was the firmness of Elizabeth, to whom the hope that her boy might announce the Christ was everything now left to her in this world.

Temple and Synagogue.

When he had written on the tablet, the tongue of the aged priest was unloosed, and he uttered the blessing for which the people had waited in vain—a blessing, not from the Temple built by Herod, but from the eternal hills of faith and obedience. Great was the multitude that assembled to hear the formal benediction of Zacharias the priest in his vestments, and went away disappointed. But a million times greater have been the generations of every clime who, not content with hearing, have themselves blessed God in the words of Zacharias the father—the priest, not of

Temple, but of home. It was not as a celibate, but as a husband, that Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and sang of deliverance from the fear which had been his weakness.

The neighbors and cousins were astounded, but we do not again hear of them. John grew up an orphan and alone, and it seems as if his change of name cut him off from his kindred. As there was no room for Jesus in the inn, so there was no room for John in the Temple, which edifice, so far as we know, he did not enter. Thousands of clergy thronged the place, where they alone could minister; and it was only by casting lots that, after long years of idleness, they could secure, if at all, an opportunity of highest service. Amid a world ignorant of God these good men huddled together, cherishing each other's faith and privileges, but hearing no missionary call from the nations scattered abroad. Already, in other cities than Jerusalem, the synagogue had displaced the priesthood, since it was nearer to the homes of the people and less under the domination of ecclesiastics. The reading of the Bible supplanted ritual, and, as we find when Jesus and Paul worshiped on the Sabbath, there was free speech for the laity. The Rabbis had not then become a caste like the priests, for Jesus was regarded as a Rabbi; and when John spoke in the wilderness he voiced a movement that made for spiritual and intellectual liberty. His position was like that of George Fox or Whitefield or Dwight L. Moody.

The Temple had been, and was still, a witness of truth. The cattle, tethered near the brazen altar, spoke of atonement for sin. Unlike our churches and chapels, the shrine lacked nothing of clergy, worshipers, or collection. It was thronged with people.

Money poured into its coffers. The State patronized the services. The hierarchy enjoyed temporal power. There was education. There was liberty of discussion. The Pharisee could wear his phylactery; the Sadducee could argue against eternal life; and the Herodians could defend the tribute to Cæsar. Our Lord could teach in the Temple, and His disciples constantly made it their resort. But while Herod was adding stone to stone, John preferred the Jordan, and Jesus realized that not one stone would remain on another. For, as we shall see, the New Temple was to be built in men's hearts.

Priests and Rabbis.

The courts were, doubtless, crowded with Jew and Gentile, as if here was in very truth a world-wide religion. But, as Paul found, within were selfishness and exclusion. Priests alone could minister. Once only in the year could the high priest enter the very presence of God. Women were separated from men. The tabernacle in the wilderness, which when first established had gathered the tribes into one brotherhood, had fulfilled its purpose, and was now a citadel of privilege.

And the Holy of Holies, once radiant with God's Presence, was empty. When the veil was rent by a Divine hand—that is, from top to bottom—behold, there was nothing within. Gone was the manna from heaven that fed the nation. Gone were the tables of law that protected the poor and the weak. Gone was Aaron's rod of discipline that blossomed into beauty. Only a free people could preserve the ark of such a covenant, and in captivity the ark disappeared. Yet the priests and the Rabbis still

taught the people that God is to be worshiped in the gloom and in the darkness of a silent loneliness. It was not the belief of Moses and the Prophets. To them, God was ever where the brightness burns. In the cleft of the rock, in the cloud by day, in the flame by night, in the glow of Urim and Thummim, in the fiery bush; the glory of the Shekinah is not darkness amid light, but light amid darkness; it is wisdom amid folly, science amid superstition, knowledge amid ignorance, hope amid fears. It was not the incense, nor the smoke of sacrifices, nor the feeble glimmer of the seven lamps on the golden candlestick, nor the tinkle of bells and pomegranates on the robes of Caiaphas, the high priest, that drew the angel Gabriel to earth; but the prayers of Zacharias, uttered not once within this costly shrine. Man himself is the temple of God, and within him must be built the altar of incense where he worships, the table of shew-bread which sustains him, the sevenfold candlestick which illuminates his judgment, and the ark of the covenant over which, like cherubim, God's Spirit hovers, with wings that could wander, but with a reverence that enthralls. To cleanse that temple was John's task; to dwell in it is the birthright of Jesus; and to welcome Him is the inestimable privilege of all mankind.

VII

HEROD—THE RIVAL

Jacob and Esau—"A Monster of Iniquity"—Christ and the Children—The Children's Charter.

WHAT I notice first about the massacre of the innocents is that here was the final sword-flash of a family feud which, for a thousand years or more, had aroused the blood-lust between two neighbor peoples. To us it may seem to be a far cry from Jacob to Jesus and from Esau to Herod, but to Obadiah and the other prophets who shared his vision the old quarrel over a birthright was eternal—it was revived in all the cruel wars that cursed successive generations; and, in essence, it was this very rivalry that provoked the first of several attempts to assassinate our Saviour. Before you dismiss as fanciful what follows, pay a visit to a modern synagogue and there learn by the teaching of your own eyes what mysterious permanence there is in all that appertains to that strange Jewish nation whose very existence is to-day an ethnological miracle.

By the recognized rules of ancestry, Herod was entitled to the crown which he wore, for he belonged to the elder branch of Isaac's race, and Jacob's children were supplanters. Indeed, it is one of those

coincidences which constantly startle us in this narrative, that the Edomites, for the first and last time in their history, attained in Herod's person to those temporal ambitions which had been thwarted through Jacob's subtlety. Nor do we read that Jesus ever laid claim to their patrimony as thus defined. It was not He, but the Roman Emperor, who deposed Archelaus, the son of Herod, and so created a vacancy on the throne of David that remains to this day—a vacancy which, despite all the hopes of the chosen people, no second CHRIST has arisen to fill. The kingdom sought by our Lord was spiritual, not temporal. It was the kingdom that Jacob, had he been wise, would have sought after, leaving the rest to Esau, as Abraham left the rest to Lot. And in the jealousies which separated Israel and Edom, we see the futility of international hatreds, ending as they always do in the slaughter of helpless children.

Jesus was not unmindful of His obligations as a first-born son. It was such that Mary presented her boy to the priests. But what was to be His birthright? Was He to expect lands or wealth or social position? Not at all. By the ordinance of Moses, an eldest son belonged especially to God; his ancestral estate was duty, and he must expect less, not more property, than his younger brothers, since, as a man redeemed from Egyptian death, he may not even lay claim to his own person. By such a reversion of our customs it was that Christ fulfilled the rules of primogeniture, as He fulfilled every other law, and was hailed by the Apostles as the Elder of many brethren—the Heir of all things; so that, in His sight, every child, however far removed from the succession, becomes as sacred as every other child,

with an indefeasible title to the riches which are unsearchable. In Him, as Son of David, we see what is really meant by *Noblesse Oblige*. The aristocracy that He founded was of sacrifice, not privilege.

Jacob and Esau.

Rebekah realized that her children, like our children, are the nations of the future. Esau, with his rough hands, fine clothing, and passion for the chase, was the ideal hero for a military despotism. Jacob, the plain farmer and merchant, who enjoyed nothing that had not been won by labor, who reaped nothing that he had not sown, and slew no beast for food that he had not first reared, was the founder of a trading people. When Jesus was born, it seemed as if the soldiers of Edom were triumphing everywhere over the civilians of Israel; but, in face of this panorama of triumphant force, He devoted Himself, not to the profession of arms, but to a manual industry; and, against all the appearances, declared that it is the meek who will inherit the earth. History has justified His wisdom. Commerce has proved more powerful than capture and conquest. The Jews have no army, no navy, no frontiers, no fortresses. But they continue as a nation, richer to-day and more powerful than at any time in their long and chequered story, while Edom is an evil memory. Her rock-hewn fastnesses, once so formidable, are haunts for the beasts of the desert.

When the Wise Men entered Jerusalem and asked for the King of the Jews, they started a controversy which will rage to the end of time. Herod and his city assumed, as a matter of course, that the new Sovereign would exercise temporal power, and they

were afraid. In a sense, they had reason to be. No monarch and no dynasty has influenced the course of history as has Jesus. His disciples were accused of turning the whole world upside down. Nor did He ever disclaim the title of "King" which the Wise Men—not wise enough to see Him first as Saviour—attributed to Him. To Pilate, He admitted that to this Kingship was He born; and the fact was asserted, for all men to see, on His very cross. Yet Herod himself, like Pilate, knew well enough that Jesus was no upstart pretender, no rebel against the State. If Jesus had been a claimant to his throne, Herod, in pretending to worship Him, must have offered to the Wise Men some kind of abdication in His favor. What the old tyrant did offer was merely worship. By the light that lighteth every man who comes into the world, Herod knew that Jesus would be called, not to abolish kingliness, but to ennoble it; not to create republics, but to inspire citizens; not to trample on crowns, but to receive them, laid at His feet; to be a King of kings and a Lord of lords. What makes the attitude of Herod so significant is precisely this—that he was not deceived as to the purpose of Christ. If he was the first man definitely to reject Him, at least he did it with his eyes open.

"A Monster of Iniquity."

Like his great ancestor, Esau, when he despised his birthright, Herod was at the point of death; and every man who is conscious of that dread enemy's approach is also near to God. For the sake of the last shreds of his power, this "profane" man threw away the everlasting fame which would have been his if he had bowed the knee to One who could pardon

even him. He knew that the stars cannot lie. He believed the Prophets. But instead of bequeathing his throne to Jesus, he fought blindly for the survival of his vested interest, and bartered his soul for a mess of pottage. In the annals of error, there is no more pitiful picture than this of the king who fought for a throne, only to murder his heir; built a temple, but killed the high priest; consummated a brilliant marriage, but slew his wife; massacred his subjects, to strengthen his dynasty—including in the slaughter infants under two years old, in order to ease that one faded life of his which had less than two years to run.

We speak of Herod as a monster of iniquity, but he is not unique. He is only one example of a constantly-recurring type. The employer who subordinates the health of his workers to his profits, the emperor who harnesses his people to dreams of aggression, the landlord who receives rent without securing sanitation, the mother who marries her daughter for money—all these are guilty, each in his degree, of Herod's sin; nor is there any evidence that a child under two years old in England to-day has a greater chance of life than a child of that age in Judea. We do not issue edicts of death, but we are careless, and the percentage of mortality remains.

Not once in later years did Jesus refer to the crime which, at Bethlehem, was aimed against Him. So far from denouncing the Herods, He was ready to suffer in their stead. He did not attempt to avenge the innocent children who had died in His cause, by stirring up insurrection against the ruling and guilty house. Once, indeed, when the Pharisees, still recalling the massacre, threatened Him with death at the hands of Herod Antipas, He did reply by hurling

the epithet "that fox" at the tetrarch; but this was after His friend John had been done to death. Even that event did not provoke Jesus to political revolt. His answer to the younger Herod was that He could not seek safety a second time in Egypt—for this was the suggestion—since there were the sick to be cured and the devils to be cast out. When the day's work was done, then, and then only, would the Worker be "perfected." Herod Antipas hugged his devils, and did not ask to be cured of his maladies. But the original wrong done by Jacob to Esau was none the less abundantly repaired. John sought earnestly to win the soul of the tetrarch. During His trial, Jesus Himself stood, silent and defenseless, before that unhappy man—Jesus, in His own word, "perfected." And Paul, still yearning to rescue the fallen family, wrestled long with Herod Agrippa. But John and Paul, like Jesus, shed their blood, so far as the Herods were concerned, in vain. It is true that on the day of Pentecost some Edomites heard the Gospel in their own tongue and rejoiced, so ending for ever their quarrel with Israel and testifying to Jesus as Prince of Peace; but of their ruling house, not one prince, not one princess, so far as we know, ever accepted the great redemption. Then, as now, it was far easier to reconcile peoples than to assuage the quarrels of their rulers.

Christ and the Children.

Driven from Bethlehem to Egypt, Jesus did not return thither. When He began His ministry, He made no attempt to revive the glories of His birth and ancestry. He came to men, as He comes to us, with His boundless love as His sole credential. But,

throughout His life, He ever heard the voice in Ramah, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not. To repay those children was His first and constant thought. He did not utter one word that a boy or girl could not understand. He filled His addresses with stories which would attract the young to His Gospel. He raised a child from the dead. From another child He drove forth a devil. And He sharply rebuked the disciples when they hindered the children from gathering around Him or shouting His praises, as He entered Jerusalem. No man, no woman, was ever named by Him as our example, but He did set a child in the midst, and bid us live as happily as that. When He foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, what seemed to wring His heart was the knowledge that suffering would fall upon the babes in their mothers' arms; and, with the cross crushing His bleeding shoulders, the sight of women, as they accompanied Him to Calvary, filled Him with pity, not for Himself, but for the little ones who would cling vainly to their parents, crying out for protection. To every child He appointed a guardian angel, who should watch over it day and night, and be constantly answerable to the Eternal Father Himself. And about the neck of every man who should cause the children to stumble, He set the millstone which should sink such an one into the deep seas of everlasting remorse. Give a child a cup of cold water, said He, and you have done it unto Me. And not the least remarkable of the numerous coincidences which constantly startle one, as this narrative proceeds, is the fact that when, at last, the Babe of Bethlehem was slain by wicked men, it was a Joseph who buried Him, and this Joseph came from Arimathea,

or Ramah. From cradle to grave His incarnate life was one predestined unity.

The Children's Charter.

So it is that what distinguishes Christian lands from all others is, first and foremost, the education of children. Orphanages and schools, day nurseries and infant clinics, special care of the weaklings, and play centers, cottage homes, and country holidays—all these are evidences that Herod has died; that Jesus has returned to Galilee from His exile in Egypt.

There are two theories of race, of which the first is that the fittest only should survive, and this was believed in Rome. Respect for the strong was there the life-breath of efficiency, and in an Empire where armies marched without ambulance there was no defense for the weak, save pity. Jesus, on the other hand, was filled with a great reverence for the backward. While others only judged by the twisted and distorted limbs, His eye—piercing to the very soul, like the rays of modern surgery—saw what was in man, the blood coursing through the veins, the heart beating in its mantle of sense, the mind striving within its prison. He would not willingly waste one finger of the meanest barbarian. He would claim the cannibal and the cripple, because both are needed by the Father of All. He would triumph, not by the slayers, but through the slain, and where to Herod, the people should die, that the King may live, to Jesus, the King should die, that the people may live.

It is the test of all temporal power—this well-being of the weakest—and Jacob, with his constant care for the women and children, was nearer to the kingdom than Esau, with his band of four hundred armed men.

VIII

FROM EGYPT TO GALILEE

The Doom of Egypt—The Return to Nazareth—Books of Life and Death.

THOSE who do their life-work in foreign lands, far from home, should not forget that Jesus also was driven into exile as a boy, and died without a roof over His head. There were multitudes of Jews in Egypt, but not one of them recognized Him as Messiah. There were shepherds, but they did not sing His praise, and wise men, but they brought no gifts. Yet in Egypt they had the Old Testament, with its prophecies, translated into the Greek vernacular—an open Bible—and they had the heathen at their very doors. Here surely was the ideal headquarters for a world-wide mission! But nothing, not one word, of the same is recorded. Our Lord went to Egypt and returned thence without arousing one flicker of interest, apparently, in any human heart. Nor at any subsequent time did He visit this unresponsive region. And when the Apostle Paul mapped out his missionary tours, as a strategist maps out the advance of his army, the territory which he set forth to win was not Egypt, but Asia Minor, Greece, and Rome herself.

The name "Egypt," like the country, means *Mud*

In Egypt man has been all that he can be as a creature of the dust, living at ease in his long valley, with the rich river at his feet, flowing he knows not whence, and bringing to him as a matter of course the red and fruitful soil of distant mountains, which he has no need to climb or to pierce with his pickaxe. There were treasures in Egypt. There was science. There were glitter and pomp. There were chariots and horses in which men trusted. But the leeks, the garlics, the cucumbers, the melons, and the onions, on which men fed themselves, grew upon the ground, and could only be gathered by stooping. The temples of Egypt were doubtless massive and abiding; but, unlike the Temple of Jerusalem, and all, even the rudest, Christian churches, they had no pinnacle, pointing to God, being finished skywards with a heavy, level line, as if worship itself must creep along the ground like the sacred and cruel crocodile. The plagues of Egypt were, as a rule, the plagues of plenty—hideous diseases on man and beast, loathsome vermin in the very sanctity of home, corrupted water, devastation by locusts, the darkness of superstition, the death even of the firstborn. In Egypt, one discovers precisely what our Lord meant when He spoke of the deceitfulness of riches choking the Word. He learnt that lesson while He was learning to walk.

The Doom of Egypt.

When Abraham left Chaldea, the great question that he had to decide was whether he would settle in Palestine, with its constant dread of drought, its crags and caves, its whirlwinds, earthquakes, and convulsions; or in Egypt, with its comfort and ease. Abraham, fleeing from famine, tasted the Egyptian

pleasures, and only escaped therefrom just in time to avoid irreparable disgrace. The first Joseph went to Egypt under compulsion, and showed us that a man so compelled may preserve his soul amid an evil environment. But when he had overcome the trials of prison on the one hand and of the palace on the other, even he directed that at least his bones should escape, and lie in the land of liberty, from which his spirit had never been separated. And when his brethren declined to follow that cortège, as they might have done—when they failed to return to the land of reverence and justice—they were enslaved. Moses was bred a prince of Egypt, but preferring the rigor of law to the luxury of a court, he also fled to the solitude of Sinai. And Jeremiah, knowing that no good could come of it, only emigrated to Egypt under protest.

The tyranny of the Nile was one with the tyranny of the Euphrates, from which Abraham fled; and "the Land of Promise," struggling for existence between the sand of the sea and the sand of the desert, was the one shred of God's earth where a man could call his soul his own, and so render up that soul to God who gave it. You find it all set out in that long 78th Psalm. You find it again in Psalm 105. The drama is the very burden of Stephen's address. It was what Paul preached at Antioch. It is prominent in the great pæan of faith which was written "to the Hebrews." And Hosea—the earliest of Minor Prophets, whose very name means "Salvation"—struck the dominant note of Jewish history when he said: "Out of Egypt have I called my son"—called him, because I loved him. Commerce, comfort, riches, courts—all these things are secondary to the supreme claim of the soul.

Joseph in Egypt, Daniel in Babylon, had shown the utmost that a good man may do to reclaim a country without changing the people's hearts. If Jesus did not revive their efforts, it was because His aims were more thorough. He knew that the best of rulers is powerless when the populace is depraved. Nations are governed neither better nor worse than they deserve.

The Return to Nazareth.

Although Joseph, the husband of Mary, was reminded by his very name of these great traditions of his race, he was apparently settling down in Egypt as a Jew of the Dispersion, when a dream aroused him. Then, like Abraham and Moses, he also returned again to the Promised Land, taking with him the Child and His mother. But he heard that Archelaus reigned in Jerusalem, and he had to turn aside from Judea, so that Jesus became once more an exile, this time in His own native land. In Bethlehem He could trace an ancestry. In Jerusalem He could claim a crown. But in Nazareth He was stripped of all His privileges. He began life simply as a village boy. The only etiquette that He learned was respect for others. His only statecraft was service. His only decoration was character. His only armory was Scripture. Nothing, not even goodness, was made easier for Him than it is for us; and we who chafe at our days of routine will find that routine was also His appointed lot. He understands its every detail. He was in all points tempted or tested like as we are, yet without sin; and He is thus able to put us at our ease with our best selves—the best that is in us—so helpful is His friendship, so sympathetic.

It was well for us that He was not brought up artificially, as a Prince or a Lama, but with the home for His school, with a mother for His guide, and with the countryside for His outlook.

Jesus did not revisit Egypt, nor did He once mention this place of His babyhood. But on His inner consciousness the thought and life of Egypt left a color that never faded. When one looks at the colossal effigies of the Pharaohs, one cannot but think of our Lord's question—how, by taking thought, a man can add one cubit to his stature. In that single sentence He summed up the megalomania of a thousand despots, and reduced us all to our true limits. If His Bible was the Alexandrian Septuagint, translated by seventy scholars, so was His Gospel to be preached by seventy evangelists, who could translate the Word of God into terms, not of language, but of life and faith and happiness.

And, further, He first dealt with the one eternal fact which even Egypt cannot avoid—the fact of death. The Land of Promise was a place of home, where men could dwell, each under his own vine and fig-tree, with those fruits that one must gather, not by stooping, but by reaching forth the hand and looking upward. The House of Bondage was a place where men lived among the tombs. By the desperate device of embalming the body, they hoped to win the splendors of immortality, and they succeeded. You may still see the face of Rameses II. in the museum of Cairo. Jesus taught us that, whatever happens to the body, in Him our souls are safe; and, by removing from us His own most blessed and wounded body, bearing it with Him to the throne of God, He destroyed for ever the efficacy of relic-worship, which

fades into a memory, having accomplished in Egypt all the human consolation of which it was capable. Prolonged and determined as has been the attempt of the Catholic Church, in this respect, to undo His liberating work, that attempt has failed.

Books of Life and Death.

Where our Bible is a Book of Life, the Bible of ancient Egypt was a Book of the Dead. In the British Museum you may see it unfolded, with all its cold and pitiless portrayal of the Last Judgment. Egyptians knew that the time would come when souls would be weighed in the balance, and they recognized that, under this test, character alone would count. Like Paul, when he wrote to the Romans, they held that man's life in this world, left to itself, tended steadily to reduce him to the level of an animal, and their conception of a future state was that our souls would return, not to God, but to brute beasts and creeping creatures. They constantly separated the righteous from the unrighteous—the sheep from the goats—and by what test? Knowing our Lord's parable, one is startled to find, in the Egyptian ritual of the Last Judgment, the soul crying out:

"I have won for myself God by my love; I have given bread to the hungry—water to the thirsty—clothes to the naked; I have made a refuge for the forsaken."

Even the terrible declaration of Jesus—that of every idle word a man shall speak he must give an account, when all is known—has its parallel in the Book of the Dead, where punishment is set out as

essentially a disclosure of truth, in which our conversations are evidence.

This was the fear of death under which, in the words of Zecharias, afterwards developed by the Apostle Paul, men were all their lifetime subject to bondage. What it means to the world and to each of us can best be illustrated—though it is only illustration—by comparing the scales of right and wrong, as painted by the artists of Egypt, with those same scales as sculptured by the masons of the Middle Ages above the doors of the Sainte Chapelle in Paris. To heal the sick, to feed the hungry, to support the widowed mother, to hallow the marriage-feast, and to cheer the poor—all this would have left the salvation of man still imperfect, if the last and final terror of retribution remained as a shadow over the imagination and the conscience. Across the heartless logic of the Egyptian Bible—the blind tragedy of cause and effect—the Redeemer shed His life-blood; and while the Judge assumes the black cap, His ministers, in every land and every age, offer mercy to the repentant soul. With Jesus it was not, as in Egypt, that we win for ourselves God by our love. It was God who, by His love, won for Himself us men.

IX

THE EDUCATION OF JESUS

Arithmetician—The Practical Observer—Outdoor Life.

I HAVE been reading a "Life" of our Lord, in which it is assumed that as a boy He went to school. In the Gospels no mention is made of a class-room, and what we are told is simply that He was subject to His parents. On them, as on all parents, lay the whole responsibility for His upbringing; nor did they delegate their task to house-masters or any other person paid to act in their place. A lad whose people are too poor to send him to Eton or Harrow should notice that Jesus also was a mere day-boy. All His lessons were taught at home, and when He became famous, the men who had enjoyed the educational advantages of Jerusalem or Alexandria or Capernaum were astonished to find out how well He knew His letters, having, as they thought, never learnt; while others sneered at the idea of any good thing arising out of Nazareth, a place where no one would look for a famous college.

So far as one can discover from the records, His attainments were reading, writing, and arithmetic, all of which He could have learnt, and doubtless did learn, from Joseph and Mary. His ability to read

included the Hebrew of the Bible, as recited in the synagogue; and, unlike those who babble the Lessons, or mutter them, or drawl them, He read so well that the people, while listening to Isaiah's words, fastened their eyes on Him of whom Isaiah spoke. His handwriting was plain and legible—so plain, indeed, that the Jews, who watched His finger as He traced their record on the ground, left, one by one, in shame; but setting a supreme value on personal intercourse, He wrote neither books nor letters, and so eluded one of the most soul-destroying tyrannies of our time.

Arithmetician.

His favorite subject was arithmetic, in which His accuracy, as of a skilled artisan, accustomed to the foot-rule, was unerring. He always liked to put a numeral into His teaching, and the numerals were always appropriate. There were five wise virgins and five foolish ones. The first servant had five talents, and the second two, while the third had only one. The laborers were engaged at one penny a day, and the last gang began work at the eleventh hour. The woman hid her leaven in three measures of meal—how often had our Saviour seen His mother do the same!—and what the other housewife lost was one piece of silver out of ten. He spoke not vaguely of sheep, but precisely of an hundred sheep, less one, which leaves ninety and nine. The price of sparrows was two to the farthing; and seed, if properly sown, would yield, some thirtyfold, some sixtyfold, and some an hundredfold, showing that even good ground varies in fertility. God forgives us ten thousand talents; all that we can forgive our neighbor is, by comparison, one hundred pence.

To Him, every coin, every weight, every measure, every numeral meant the Soul. He chose not several apostles but twelve, and not a multitude of preachers but seventy; while, after His resurrection, the fishes caught in Peter's net, when counted in His presence, were exactly one hundred and fifty and three, while the distance of the boat from the shore was about two hundred cubits. In the wilderness, He fasted forty days; and when He fed the multitudes, He verified His statistics by arranging the people in hundreds and in fifties, thus knowing exactly that five thousand, besides women and children, were satisfied with five loaves and two fishes, while twelve basketfuls remained, and that four thousand were satisfied with seven loaves and a few little fishes, while seven basketfuls remained. These statistics Jesus noted at the time, and weeks afterwards He was able to quote them accurately. In Him, we see God as Craftsman, calculating the times and seasons by His solar system, yet numbering with equal care the very hairs of our head. In that Divine audit, not one of us at any time can be "missing." Amid the abundance, not one soul and not one morsel of bread must be wasted. Here is a ledger in which all the figures are set out without concealment or chicanery, an example for stock exchange, banker, missionary society, merchant, company promoter, and cathedral chapter, of what is meant by honest finance. We realize why we are told that gold, in the City of God, must be "clear as crystal." And we appreciate why Zacchæus, the tax-gatherer, on meeting Jesus, at once began to apologize for his ledgers, hoping earnestly that all would be found in order.

Insurance companies, which reckon up our days on

scientific principles, habitually refer to a healthy life as a good life. The splendid physique which enabled Jesus to do His work at such high pressure, without displaying irritation, or suffering from the slightest trace of mental or bodily strain, was the direct result of His daily conduct. He who became Master of others was complete Master of Himself. It was at the end of what we call Holy Week, after clearing the Temple of money-changers, defeating innumerable opponents in debate, and announcing the Iscariot's treachery, then actually in progress, that He said, "My peace I leave with you"—not an empty greeting, as the Eastern world offers "peace," but the abiding calm of unchallengeable self-control. With so much to fill Him with foreboding, He refused to worry about it, but lived each day as it came, holding that sufficient to the day is its "evil"—by which He meant, I think, the difficulties to be overcome, the temptations to be defeated, and the troubles to be alleviated. To Him, each morrow should be kept at a distance, as an enemy of the ever-priceless present; and while His habit of concentration is discoverable also in every efficient statesman or captain of industry, yet with Jesus we find that the game of life was played with an easy, inevitable genius—what Luke calls "grace"—which reminds one of some incomparable athlete, say a cricketer, to whom no delivery of the ball, slow or fast, straight or twisty, comes as a surprise; who hits with certainty all round the wicket, yet, to the end of the innings, preserves his wicket intact. It was the result of the single eye, as Jesus called it, assisted by constant practice and vigilant training.

There was much prayer. There was much fasting

or self-denial. But it was not the prayer, not the fasting, that you see in a monastic or conventual institution. Jesus was not satisfied unless and until His disciples were able to stand alone in the open street, calling no man master save Himself, and looking to Him only for the rule of life.

The Practical Observer.

With His mind thus constantly at ease, and His judgment as unruffled as a mountain tarn, yet as sensitive as that tarn to every breath of air and shaft of light, Jesus was quick to observe, and of a most tenacious memory. Having younger brothers and sisters, He knew how to mix with children, who regarded Him as one of themselves; and even when they played at events so solemn as weddings and funerals, He approved, for He had His own standards for testing irreverence. Having devoted the best part of His life to helping His mother, He had a right to comment upon what will ever be the greatest of all industries—that is, housekeeping; and when Martha's sense of duties—which is not the same as a sense of duty—invaded the inner sanctuary of her nature, Jesus knew how to put the case, and His few words of advice to "Martha, Martha," will, for all time, correct the tendency, in home and in church, to sacrifice the eternal—the real life within us—to the harmless yet temporary and trivial. He knew about spring cleaning—how each room is emptied, then swept and finally garnished; and He preached one great sermon on washing-up—how much easier it is to cleanse or wipe the outside of a cup or platter than the inside, as some of us (who perhaps did not notice it until it was pointed out) can testify from our own war-work.

He could trim a lamp, fill it with oil, and set it ready on the lamp-stand; and with homely humor He could point out the absurdity of covering the light with a bushel—the symbol of trade or business or profession—which would, in fact, not only prevent illumination, but extinguish the flame. He could cook, being able to broil fish, and knowing how awkward it is to dispose of salt that has lost its savor. He was an excellent judge of building, now commenting upon the great stones of the Temple, and then again criticizing not merely the convenience of some house, which is what most of us think about, but the solidity of its foundations—whether it rests on sand or on rock, and how far it is exposed to and can resist cloudbursts. With a mind bent on measuring everything by an eternal standard, He would inquire not merely whether an edifice is beautiful, but will it last? And one appreciates more and more the wonderful sanity of it all. Perhaps the climax came when, as a domestic servant or slave, Jesus washed the weary feet of His disciples. One likes the touch that He laid aside His garments and girded Himself with a towel—such respect for common, though useful, things; such close attention to a humdrum duty; such complete knowledge of how, most conveniently and expeditiously, it is to be performed. When He healed the paralytic, He also bade him "take up his bed." When He raised a maiden from the dead, she was to be given "something to eat." When Lazarus came forth from the tomb, it was Jesus who told the people what was obvious, that they should loose his grave-clothes. And when He rose Himself on Easter Day, He left His wrappings folded, and the napkin about His head, not lying with the linen

clothes, but by itself, as if, by instinct, he knew in that solemn moment that a nobler material had been used by Joseph of Arimathea to bind His still bleeding brow.

Outdoor Life.

He lived much out of doors. He so arranged His hours that He could work while it was day, believing that in the night no man can work. His life was thus a plea for early rising and for avoidance of artificial hours—late suppers, midnight dancing, and the rest. From the sky, He could form an opinion of next day's weather. He knew that sheep follow the shepherd, and must sometimes be carried. In the morning, He listened until He heard the cock crow. And He liked to see how a hen gathers her chickens under her wing. He could distinguish between wheat and tares. As a carpenter, He knew how to fit a yoke without galling the animal's neck. He had watched the pruning of a vine. He was the best of fishermen on the Lake of Galilee, and He could tell you how fish are sorted, the good from the bad. He could ride on an ass. He had studied the camel. He had lived among wild beasts, and knew the wolf. He was familiar—too familiar—with the thorn; and with the fig-tree and the sycamore, which did not conceal from Him the diminutive form of Zacchæus. He was worshiped with branches of palm, and He first, in one gem of purest poetry, called on us to "consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, they spin not; yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

Thus it was that He became so attractive, because so helpful a preacher. His mind being stored with accurate impressions of all around Him, He did not

prepare His sermons, and advised us also to take no anxious thought what we shall say—let the Spirit suggest. He spoke with authority—the authority of actual experience—and not as the scribes, who depended on their libraries. Then, as now, women valued Him because He took their house-work seriously—far more seriously than He took the politics of the Roman Empire. Workmen of all kinds respected His judgment, because they recognized in life as in death the print of their nails on His hands. As to education—that home, that workshop, that mother—the daily round, the common task—did in very truth furnish all He needed to ask.

X

CHRIST THE QUESTIONER

Resolver of Perplexities—"Things added"—The Practice of Obedience.

WHEN Jesus was a boy of twelve years old, He did not seem to have one enemy in the whole wide world. Herod was dead; Archelaus had been deposed; Joseph's sleep was untroubled by dreams; and no one appeared to associate the growing lad with the Babe of Bethlehem, who vanished into obscurity with the old King's final massacre. Thus it was that, when He visited Jerusalem on what we to-day should call a Bank Holiday, He was allowed by His parents to wander about that turbulent city without let or hindrance, unafraid of the cosmopolitan crowds or of the garrison of rough, foreign soldiers. There was not one circumstance to suggest that here was the city which had already hatched a plot to destroy Him; nor, when He met the Rabbis, would anyone have imagined that this was in fact the tribunal which, at length, would demand His execution as a felon, guilty of blasphemy.

What impressed the writers of the Old Testament was too often the magnificence of Jerusalem, her gates and her walls, the gold and purple of her Temple,

and the silver trumpets that sounded in her courts. To all this was now added the pomp of Rome. Jesus was ever conscious of greater glories than these; He spoke of angels and God's throne and of the many mansions reserved for us in heaven, as familiarly as we speak of streets and shops and gardens. Hence when, years later, His disciples asked Him to notice the Temple, which to them, though not to Him, was so wonderful a spectacle, His only comment was that not one stone should be left on the other, since all would be thrown down. He measured that mighty edifice in terms, not of years but of centuries, and so reduced it, as He reduced all human institutions, to the perspective of eternity. When left to His own devices, what interested Him, whether as boy or man, was not the Temple as such, but the people inside the Temple—the doctors, the money-changers, and the sinful woman; and He realized that even if the Temple were destroyed, like our cathedrals, by the shock of war, the soul of man would rise triumphant above the ruins.

Resolver of Perplexities.

Paul, when a boy, went to the Temple and sat as a disciple at the feet of Gamaliel, as if the only authority to be recognized by youth is the authority of the past. Jesus sat at no man's feet. Wherever He went, whether it be to a synagogue, a wedding feast, the seaside, a lonely mountain, the river Jordan, the judgment hall, the Upper Room, or Calvary, our Lord always seemed to be the Central Figure of the scene; and here in the Temple, appearing as an equal in the midst of the Rabbis, He asserted by His presence that the future has its claim, as

sacred as the claim of the past, for which future every boy and every girl is the appointed trustee. It is the business of a trustee to ask questions; not to be satisfied until he understands all about the inheritance for which he is responsible; what wrongs there are that should be righted; what burdens that are unequally distributed; what customs are hindering instead of helping; what beliefs are imperfectly apprehended. Since that day in the Temple, Jesus has been the central problem for the historian, the philosopher, the scientist, the scholar, the politician, and the social reformer, of every generation. He constantly asks questions; and just as we do not read that the doctors of Jerusalem supplied any answers—indeed, what astonished them was the answers of Jesus—so in every generation all the wisdom of the world has to return to Him as the only Resolver of perplexities. He is the Eternal Child, ever in our midst; not only trustful, not only innocent, but also observant, listening to what we say more carefully than we say it, and then quietly but irresistibly asking us the reason why. The slum, the public-house, the war—He watches them all, and would have our explanations. He does not say in so many words that war is wrong or slavery is wrong; but He asks us—Is war right? Is slavery right? What He desires to stimulate is our own conscience, which He would arouse to activity until it beats as sensitively as His own.

And it is His custom to test all that we do by its effect on the children in our midst. He sees them outside the swing doors of the public-house. It is with their eyes that He watches the pictures that we show them. He feels every hurt that war inflicts

on them. He insists on reducing all theology to terms that they can understand.

All through His ministry Jesus taught by questions. We lay down creeds and tell people to repeat them. Jesus drafted a catechism in which each of us is left to fill in the replies. He did not seek, like a drill-sergeant, to command assent, for this would have blighted initiative. He preferred to evoke our assent, so that all who follow Him—as the one supreme Inspirer of education—do so of their own free will. He might have asserted that He was sinless. He chose to ask which of us can convict Him of sin; and though millions have heard the challenge, no one has yet come forward to respond to it. He might have told His disciples plainly: "I am the Son of God." Instead, He asked them what men were saying on the matter, and, with special emphasis, what their own view was. He might have proclaimed aloud His risen majesty. He preferred to inquire of Mary Magdalene: "Why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?" His inquiries were a holy office in which there was no torture, no dungeon, but only candor, sympathy, and the light of day. His was a propaganda devoid of rancor or persecution. His saving of men is a personal negotiation between the individual and Himself—that or nothing—and the only infallibility that we need recognize is His voice, as each man or woman hears it.

"Things added."

What He organized was a Church, every member of which was individually to search the Scriptures, scan the horizon of history, study the mystery of pain and disease, and apply His Spirit of Truth to

every relation of life. And this is why Christianity in every era unlooses the energies of men, sending them forth as pioneers, now into the depths of the coal-mine, then, again, aloft, as on wings, above the clouds; then to the chill solitudes of Arctic ice; yet not forgetting the pathless forests of Equatorial Africa. The telescope is Christian; the microscope is Christian; the locomotive is Christian; telegraphy is Christian; steamships are Christian; Christian, that is, in ultimate origin—the things that are added unto those who first seek the Kingdom of God. To what uses we devote these gifts is a matter on which we must give our answer before His judgment-seat. And one reason why we are constantly cursed with wars is that sometimes nations have used for aggressive ends those great powers of the mind which He liberated from superstition and barbarism. He cannot offer us the plowshare without also offering us the sword. On Christendom lies the choice which shall be grasped. In Him is Science; with us is the question whether Science shall slay or heal.

Not one detail of our Lord's first conversation with the Rabbis has been recorded. These men of the letter that killeth let slip every syllable of His first wonderful teaching. They were astonished, not by His truth, which is everlasting, but by His youth, which was accidental. If they had had their way with Him, they would have advertised His precocity, accepting Him, not as the Lord of Life, but as an infant prodigy—a boy preacher, a religious sensation. And when—if I may set out a hypothesis—He had grown to man's estate, their interest would have waned, for not one of them accepted Him as Messiah —not one, by which I mean that not one of them

submitted himself to the will of our Lord: they discussed Him—they admired Him—but obedience —No!

When Mary burst in on Him, she had apparent cause for complaint. The feast days were ended. Jesus must have known that it was time to return to Nazareth. They had sought for Him anxiously, first among kinsfolk, then among acquaintances; and they had returned a whole day's journey to Jerusalem. Why had He thus dealt with them? Theirs was the usual complaint of parents, who habitually blame their children less for doing wrong than for giving trouble! Joseph and Mary loved Jesus dearly, were ready to feed Him and clothe Him and teach Him, but were apt to overlook His aim in life. The two questions which Jesus addressed to them were His earliest recorded words. However careless the Rabbis might be, Mary did not forget to commit those questions to memory. Her heart at least was not stony, but good ground. Why was it that she and Joseph had to seek Him so sorrowfully? Because they had left Him to live His inner life alone. And why had His earthly guardian been thus alienated? Because he had forgotten that the supreme duty of man is the business of a Heavenly Father—that the Son of Man is also Son of God.

The Practice of Obedience.

Throughout our Lord's life, there was about "the third day" a mysterious and deliberate splendor. He spoke of Jonah's three days and three nights in the whale's belly, and said that so would the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. He said that if they destroyed the Temple,

in three days He would rebuild it in His own body. It was on the third day after His call of the first disciples that, at the marriage feast, He revealed Himself in miracle. It was on the third day that He set forth to raise Lazarus from the dead. The third day was His day of resurrection; and when, on the third day, His parents returned to Jerusalem—the hope of His Messiahship buried beneath years of disappointment—He raised that hope from the grave and inspired them once more with His greatness. The great acts of His life were thus unhurried. Instant as was the working of His mind, there were supreme decisions at which He declined to arrive until, for days and nights, He had waited upon the will of His Father.

After this visit to the Temple, He went down with His parents,—what an expressive phrase!—descending, as it were, from the high tableland of dogma to the plains of duty, and turned His back on Jerusalem and His face to Nazareth, without one person suggesting that here surely was a sacrifice of priceless opportunity which ought somehow to be avoided. During that apprenticeship, Jesus was not a king, but—in Scriptural words—"a subject." Until He had spent that long period upon the practice of obedience, He did not venture on public work. Insight, eloquence, ambition—how easy are these accomplishments, compared with humility, self-restraint, perseverance! As He obeyed, so He grew, thus becoming a favorite, not by caprice, nor by accident, but by merit. Also, He was a growing favorite. As His stature increased, so did His faculties, and every faculty was devoted to worship and service. Like the Rabbis who talked with Him, the

neighbors also admired Him; but, like the Rabbis, they did not feel His personal claim on them. They did not *accept* Him.

Till the end of His days Christ might (as some hold) have lived as an Example—dignifying labor, consecrating disease, glorifying old age, calmly enduring a natural death; but He achieved greater things. Such lives teach us great lessons. Joseph, the husband of Mary, lived precisely thus, and thus he died. But Jesus knew that man was created in the image of God, and that while his limbs were molded for labor, his soul was inspired for dominion. To avoid evil, to suffer disease, to endure death, to accept the grave, was not enough. Evil, and disease, and death, and the grave must be subdued, conquered, trampled underfoot. Adam with his spade had been overcome; Christ must wield the sword. Adam had named the universe; Christ must judge it. To serve men was good, but to win them was better; while to enable them to win one another was best of all. If there had been any doubt about it, this doubt would have been dispelled by the challenging voice of John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea. To the echo of that trumpet-call Jesus listened; listening, He recognized "the word of God." He laid aside His tools for ever; He walked to the banks of the Jordan.

XI

CHRIST IN THE CONGREGATION

John the Baptist—The Kingdom of Heaven—Known by Fruit.

THE bank clerk who, to the surprise of his friends, wins the Victoria Cross, had that sudden courage latent in him when he sat behind the counter. Nurse Cavell was all that we now know years before she faced the firing party. It is not the limelight that makes the actor, nor the battle the general; and when Jesus, after eighteen years of obscurity at Nazareth, stepped forth upon the stage of history, there to play His unapproachable part, what happened was only that a veil was withdrawn. As His most intimate friend put it, the Christ was manifested, or displayed, or shown to the world. The unsearchable resources of His character shone forth with less and less reserve, until at last He was lifted up, and so drew all men unto Him.

Luke tells us that for fifteen of the eighteen silent years Tiberias Cæsar reigned at Rome. If ever a monarch had the chance of bettering mankind, it was he; but when Jesus came, the sick still lay in the streets, the lepers still rotted in wretched isolation; and while legions of soldiers garrisoned the Empire, legions of devils tormented the heart. In one of those

verses which at first sight seem to be fuller of unfamiliar names than of spiritual consolation, Luke records that Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod Antipas was tetrarch of Galilee, Philip was tetrarch of Ituræa and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene. The Promised Land was thus in utter subjection to foreigners. Its unity was shattered. Its provinces had lost their ancient and sacred titles; and where the Prophets spoke of Zebulun and Naphtali, the Evangelists make mention of Galilee and Decapolis. In the golden days of liberation, Moses and Aaron had themselves led the people; but Annas and Caiaphas, their successors in the high-priesthood, had to yield precedence to tetrarchs and proconsuls, and, even in the Gospel, are mentioned last in the long list of dignitaries. Every theory of government had been tried, only to break down. Under the Judges, a republic failed; and under the Kings a monarchy. With Ezra and Nehemiah, what we should call home-rule was established; yet with the fall of the Maccabees the nation again succumbed to despotism.

John the Baptist.

But among peasantry and fishermen there still smoldered the embers of liberty. John the Baptist, had he so desired, would have been an ideal leader of revolt, and of the new monarchy the Lord Jesus would have been an ideal King. The times seemed to be ripe. Among our Lord's chosen apostles was Simon, who belonged to the Zealots, or national party. The sons of Zebedee, after years of communion with Jesus, were so little touched by His ideals that they asked to sit, the one to the right and the other to the

left of His temporal throne. The people themselves wanted to take Him by force and make Him a King; and when He was awaiting His ascension, the last error to be dispelled from the minds of His followers was that He would then set up the Kingdom of Israel. It was with such a sovereignty that the Devil tempted Him in the wilderness; the soldiers thus mocked Him in Herod's palace, and Pontius Pilate pinned that same superscription to His cross.

It was the supreme service of John that, breathing this dangerous air, he avoided all such sedition against the civil power as Fenianism and Sinn Fein, and announced a kingdom, not of earth, but limitless as the heavens; a revolution, not of states, but of souls; a release, not from despotism, but from sins. Leaving the kings on their thrones, he proclaimed the immediate and eternal responsibility of the sovereign people. What concerned him was not Herod the tetrarch, but Herod the husband. John died, not to liberate his country, but to defend its insulted morality; and Jesus Himself steadily refused to be party to a revolt which, as He foretold with tears, would one day deluge Jerusalem in blood.

From that doomed city where, amid the ritual, hearts remained unsatisfied; from Judea, from the Jordan valley, crowds flocked to hear John's preaching. Jesus quietly joined them, not as a rival teacher, but, with incomparable humility, as a disciple, unmarked amid the multitude, save by John himself, and then only after an interval. With Christ in the pulpit we are familiar; but here we have Christ in the pew, the divine Layman, who does not criticize the sermon or discuss the style of it, but receives it with reverence as "the word of God" to Him, and so ponders over

it. There was not a sentence spoken by John that Jesus did not remember and hand on to others. If John said, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," then this was what Jesus also preached when He began His ministry. When the Twelve were sent forth, and after them the Seventy, they were bidden, each in turn, to preach John's Good Tidings of the Kingdom. John so spoke that what he said could be preached over again by the Saviour Himself in person, and could be spread abroad by His missionaries, alike among Jews and Gentiles—everywhere reaching men's hearts. For addresses, sermons, hymns, articles in the newspapers, speeches, one can imagine no severer test.

The Kingdom of Heaven.

Not that Jesus repeated John's words by rote, or heedlessly. On the contrary, He enriched the original theme, until it was merged in His own grander music, as a symphony gathers around some simple motive. In Matthew, we read of the Kingdom of Heaven, or of happiness—meaning that happiness, like a kingdom, has its frontiers, its laws, its defenses, its discipline. But Luke uses a different term—the Kingdom of God—showing that, apart from God's rule, there is no rule of happiness. Jesus, observing as He did that the people constantly misunderstand the meaning of happiness, teaches us that the Kingdom has its "mysteries" or State secrets, which can only be indicated by parables. It is like unresisting leaven, which a woman can handle at will, but which spreads its influence slowly but surely, and in utter silence, until all is leavened, and the meal which would have choked us is transformed into the bread that sustains

us. Small in origin as is a mustard-seed, it is of an intense life, and so grows into the greatest of all trees, in the branches of which—Anglican, it may be, or Congregational, or Salvationist—many anomalies and even abuses may shelter, injuring the fruit, but no more able than the birds of the air to destroy the rising sap—the inward vitality of the divinely-planted Church. The Kingdom of Heaven is a treasure hidden in the field of a man's daily duty, to obtain which treasure he will sell all that he hath—ambition, luxuries, indulgences—because that special field, so unattractive to others, has become for him the one place of happiness. Amid all pearls—art, literature, beauty, social success—it is so much the greatest of pearls, that men and women—the goodly merchants of their time and opportunities—sacrifice all the rest to obtain that one final reward of wise spiritual leading. Being within us, the Kingdom is safe against those who would destroy the body but cannot hurt the soul; yet we cannot win it by our own unaided efforts. John preached repentance, a change of mind, as passport to the Kingdom; but Jesus, with His profounder insight, realized that evil must be expelled, as well as forsworn. "*If,*" said He, "I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, *then* the Kingdom of God is come unto you." Thus, in half a dozen tremendous words, John's simple idea of God's monarchy is elaborated into a vision of God the Father, as Sovereign; God the Son, as Conqueror; and God the Spirit, as Living Force—a Trinity, not academic, nor theological, but present, practical, omnipotent—a challenge, here and now, to the league of actual devils, which have usurped the soul of man.

With Jesus thus listening, John fearlessly told the Jews that "patriotism is not enough." Summing

up the prophetic warnings, he said that nations, like certain trees, must be known by their fruits, and that already the inevitable ax of retribution was laid—not at the branches or outlying synagogues or colonies of Judaism, but at its root and center. That terrible simile is based on the shrewdly observed botanical fact that, as a rule, the wood of fruit-trees is useless save as fuel, so that in planting our gardens we must choose between the trees that refresh our life and the trees that add to our furniture. To the memory of our Lord the ominous parable constantly recurred. Do men gather grapes of thorns—He would ask—or figs of thistles? His one miracle of destruction was the withering of a barren yet leafy fig-tree, growing there under the walls of Jerusalem; a perpetual sign against that city's abundance of empty professions.

Known by Fruit.

John spoke of nations simply as trees of the forest, planted each by itself, and afterwards decaying. Jesus enriched the parable by suggesting that His followers would be branches growing from one stem or trunk—what Isaiah called the stem of Jesse—which would be His own self, sharing life with all who desire it. He compared Himself, not with the oak, or elm, or cedar, the heroes of the forest; but with the vine, which cannot rear itself one yard from the earth without support, and every tendril of which is guided constantly hither and thither. Jesus, who commanded the winds and waves, was of all men most dependent upon prayer and fasting, and perfectly responsive to God's care.

John thought of God as the Forester, whose keen eye judges the trees, so that one is spared and another

hewn down. To Jesus, the Father is a Husbandman, who uses, not an ax to destroy, but a knife to prune, so that what is fruitful may increase in fruit-bearing, and only the dead be removed. John discerned national decay as a fact. Jesus probed the causes of it. In the vine, mere wood becomes mere rubbish. The branch is only healthy as a vehicle for the life-sap to reach the ripening grapes. Riches—religion—power—these are all to be tested by the love, the joy, the peace which they produce; and love, joy, peace are the fruits, not of the branch by itself, but of the True Vine, of which the branch is a part.

XII

THE GENERATION OF VIPERS

Within and Without—"They say and do not"—Essential Distinctions—One is your Master.

TO the Jews, as to other ancient nations, geography was itself a symbol. From the historic day when the prophet Elisha called upon Naaman the Syrian to bathe his leprosy seven times in the river Jordan, and so be healed of his plague, that famous stream, descending, as its name implies, to a sea of death, seemed to be washing away the impurities of a people. The ordinance of baptism, which John there instituted, thus expressed a familiar idea. To the multitudes, as to Naaman's servants, it was simple enough merely to wash and be clean. Thousands of penitents were so immersed, confessing their sins; and so widespread was the Revival that John's disciples also baptized, while, a few months later, the followers of Jesus—acting, it would appear, on their own responsibility—administered the rite even more frequently.

Baptismal regeneration became a vogue. The cure for all evil was to be no longer those oft-repeated Temple sacrifices, but an enthusiasm for cold water, for fresh air, for locusts and wild honey—what we call

the simple life! And if hygiene could have saved mankind, if vegetarianism, or total abstinence, or fish on a Friday, could have redeemed the heart, the problem of sin would have been easily solved. But, at an early moment in the mission, the two groups of reformers differed over what is really meant by purification; and Jesus, wasting no time over argument, quietly left the Jordan, and made His way to Galilee, baptizing no one, whether in river or in lake, and finding His work, not in the empty wilderness, but at the well of Samaria, where, to a poor woman, whose character had been wrecked, He offered, not the external ceremony which cleanses the body, but the living waters which cleanse and refresh the soul within. It was not until He had settled with sin that He ordained baptism for His Church, to be a symbol, wide as the world, of an otherwise accomplished fact.

Within and Without.

What healed Naaman was not the river Jordan as such, but a faith in God, seven times tested. By the *ghauts* of Benares we may see to-day how useless it is for men and women to put their trust in a sacred stream, while a redemption which depends on habits inevitably develops, not happiness of mind, but caste. Jesus did not undervalue the externals of life. He washed the feet of His disciples, and He rebuked Simon the Pharisee because he forgot to bring water for that ablution. Slovenliness was no part of our Lord's piety. But, on the other hand, He would have us "hear and understand." When He washed the disciples' feet, He was thinking, not only of the dust of the roadside, but of the dignity of menial service. In His own incomparable manner He was thereby

rebuking those twelve men, not one of whom had offered to do that humble work for the others and for Him. When He spoke to Simon, He was teaching, not cleanliness merely, valuable though that is, but courtesy. And, similarly, He denied that food, even if eaten with unwashen hands, as may sometimes happen, can defile a man. It is what comes from us, and especially from our mouths, that defiles us; and when Peter asked Him to expound this most candid of all His parables, He answered plainly that "out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." We deal with crime by imprisoning the criminal, adding bondage of body to bondage of soul. Our Lord set the prisoner free, delivering him from the law, and substituting His new commandment of love, which makes a man forsake evil because he desires to do good. In etiquette, as in every social accomplishment, Jesus was perfect; He was always entirely at His ease in any company, but He knew that etiquette is a concealment. His constant accusation against the scribes was that they were hypocrites, or mask-wearers, and His chief concern was what lay behind.

Great preachers usually feel flattered by a large and fashionable congregation. John, on the other hand, was indignant. It was the quality of a Church, its sincerity and true repentance, that alone mattered to him. The Pharisees and the Sadducees were at variance over that vital matter the Resurrection, but it was not merely their theology that disturbed either the Baptist or our Lord. What Christ noticed was the broad phylactery, or obtrusion of the Scriptures, by those who did not obey them, the enlarged borders to the garments—what we should call frock-coats—

bespeaking a holiness that costs nothing except a tailor's bill; the keen desire for the uppermost rooms at feasts, that is, for social status, and for the chief seats in the synagogues, or, as we should put it, religious preferment; and, last but not least, for greetings in the market-place—to which we may compare an honored position on the Stock Exchange or at the Mansion House.

"They say and do not."

With Jesus listening to his every syllable, John boldly denounced the governing and respected classes of his day as "a generation of vipers." That the epithet struck like a knife, we know of a certainty, for years later Jesus repeated it more than once, with an emphasis all the more terrible because it was His own. There is, I think, evidence that, before endorsing John's words, Jesus, by personal observation, satisfied Himself of their justice. In the very stress of the final controversies which were a prelude to the Cross, His mind was so completely free from animus that—to use our own expression—He "went out of His way" to tell His disciples how the scribes and Pharisees, sitting in Moses' seat, must be obeyed for the truth that is in them. No one has ever put such strength into human language as Jesus, but, while He denounced, He never abused; every term that He employed accurately fitted the case. His verdict was simply that "they say and do not."

The peculiar quality of the viper is that, feeding on good food, it turns everything to poison, and, crawling on the ground, rises only to strike a victim. Look, for instance, at the Pharisee and the publican, both going up into the Temple to pray. Each of them

addressed his prayer to God. But the Pharisee claimed God's praise, while the publican begged for God's mercy. The Pharisee judged himself by the lowest standard—by comparison with the extortioner, the unjust, and the adulterer; while the publican, with bowed head, submitted himself to the highest. The Pharisee went away, therefore, unwarned (as John put it) of the wrath to come, while the publican was "justified"—that is, was brought into line with righteous standards. The same act of devotion lulled one man to sleep, and stirred the other to repentance. The Pharisee did not realize that, in giving alms to the poor, he should have asked why men are so poor as to require alms. He did not know, apparently, that while he fasted twice a week, others went hungry all the time. And—viper-like—he could not lift up his head without striking poison into a fellow-creature. "Even this publican," said he in his prayer, thereby insinuating extortion, injustice, and adultery, against a man at that moment engaged with him in a common act of worship. Was it any wonder that, with crushing iteration, the Lord Jesus exclaimed: "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

Essential Distinctions.

Here we see how our Lord attacked the religious, to save religion. Twice He drove the money-changers from the Temple, because it was His Father's House. To Him, despite all tradition of the elders, it is the Temple that sanctifies the gold, not the gold that sanctifies the Temple; and, in His eyes, the plainest conventicle is as hallowed as the most gorgeous cathedral, because, where two or three are gathered

together, there is He in the midst. It is not the gift that hallows the altar, but the altar that hallows the gift; and men, if they need an oath, should swear by the widow's mite, which includes herself, rather than by the rich man's thousands, which remain mere money. The widow's mite, the widow's house, the widow's importunity, the widow's son—His test for society was more frequently this than any other—how the widow is treated. To this day, the widow and her children are the unsolved problem of poor law and charity. He did not attack the tithes of mint and anise and cummin—such taxation was, in His opinion, not heavy enough, for it omitted weightier matters, like judgment, mercy, and faith. He would spend a night in prayer, but, for this very reason, pronounced a greater damnation on those who make long prayers a pretense, while they devour widows' houses. He agreed, that a whited sepulcher is beautiful, but He looked with a discerning eye on cemeteries, and, with entire truthfulness, declared that, as in our hearts, so in the grandest mausoleum, lie dead men's bones; that what matters is not the tombstone and its inscription, but the way we behave to our prophets and our friends when they are alive. To Him, the nameless mound in Flanders is as sacred as the most gorgeous sarcophagus in mosque or minster, and His sole concern with the grave is whether it can imprison, not the body but the soul.

Keenly diagnosing the Pharisaic disease, Jesus tells us that the man who exalts himself loses his sense of proportion. He strains at a gnat, because a gnat, though small, causes him annoyance; he swallows a camel, because a camel does not happen to irritate him. He binds heavy burdens, grievous to be borne,

and lays them on men's shoulders; but he does not move these burdens with one of his fingers. He compasses sea and land to make one proselyte (which Jesus never did), but when he is made, the proselyte is none the happier. Indeed, knowing what he has lost, as well as what he has failed to gain, he is twofold more the child of hell or of misery than the self-righteous man himself. The man is a blind guide who, not knowing that he is blind, and should himself be led, yet leads others beside himself into the ditch of disillusionment and despair.

One is your Master.

John saw the wickedness of the scribes and Pharisees. Like Moses, he pronounced a curse upon the men who removed their neighbors' landmark. Jesus came not to curse, but to bless. What He realized was not men's wickedness merely, but their woe. He did not say to them, as John did, "Who hath warned you?" as if to repel the self-righteous. He wept over Jerusalem, and would have gathered these men, as a hen gathers her chickens, but they would not. John would have it that of these very stones—the hard and heartless Gentiles—God was able to raise up children unto the great-souled patriarch Abraham. Jesus would have saved the Jews themselves; would have shown them that, though children of Abraham, they were in bondage to sin; and would have set them free. John baptized, but did no miracle; Jesus did not baptize. But when they asked Him if, then, He was greater than Abraham, He looked on them, and for their sakes, since they needed His omnipotence, He declared: "Before Abraham was, I am." But they did not ask Him to rescue them.

They did not seek His help. They took up the stones —as later they instigated the Gentiles—to destroy Him.

But we—we may still hear Him saying, Do not exalt yourselves. Be not called Rabbi. Think less of the earthly than of the heavenly Fatherhood. Because One alone is your Master, *all* ye are brethren. Be it noted, ALL. Not one exception made for emperor, pope, general, scientist, millionaire, artist, politician, or wage-earner. In this holy family there is one place for each, but no second place for pride or prejudice, for grievance or malice. On His forehead Jesus wore no phylactery, because the law of the family was hid in His heart. To His garments there was no enlarged border, because His entire robe, woven throughout and seamless, clothed Him like righteousness—type of His character which was self-consistent and in perfect proportion. By His humility He left it to His Father to exalt Him, and, having abased Himself, He now rises amongst us, in Divine and unutterable majesty.

XIII

CHRIST AND FINANCE

Christ's Mode of Living—Co-workers with God—Dives and Lazarus.

AS the people listened to John, they began to realize that baptism and repentance are not the end of the good life, but only the beginning; and they asked the question which every reformer has to answer, namely: What shall we do? John answered that if any of them had two coats, he should give one away, and that, similarly, he should share with others his food. In one sentence, John summed up what we call Socialism, as if, living at a distance, he could see this planet as a whole—a common heritage, granted by the Creator to our race, so that, in forest and field and mine and factory, there is enough, but no more than enough, to supply the needs of man's ever-more-abundant life. Whence it follows that a superfluity in some homes means that in others the people are less well fed than they ought to be, and less well clothed and taught and washed and healed when they are ill, because the balance is disturbed—the world is out of joint.

If, as a nation, we had followed John's teaching, and spent on missions what we now have to

spend on war, who knows what guarantees of peace and justice we might not have established in the world? One way or the other, we have to learn the lesson, that our incomes are not our own. Cæsar will have our money or God will have it, but in Christ's accountancy there is no third column for Self.

On no occasion do we find that He carried with Him one farthing. At Samaria, it was the disciples who went into the village to buy meat. When they asked Him about giving tribute to Cæsar, they had to bring Him the penny, for He was penniless. His only purse was the mouth of a fish that Peter caught. And when they parted His garments among them, they did not discover any coin or notes. John had preached Socialism, but of all who heard him, Jesus alone lived the creed.

Christ's Mode of Living.

Our Lord desired that others should live as He did. He told His twelve apostles, and afterwards His seventy evangelists, that they need not provide money in their purses by which to pay for things; or wallet in which to collect things; or two coats, which weigh on the shoulders; or shoes, which drag on the feet; or staves—since he who is without property need fear no highwayman. To Jesus, the weight of a man's kit, like aimless gossip on the wayside, interfered with efficiency. He would have us give an account even of idle words, and avoid vain repetitions in our very prayers; and similarly, if we are to visit the cities of Israel before His return, and prepare them for Him—which, even after two thousand years of Christian effort, will require some town-

planning—we must let Him rid us of useless labor and heavy lading. Our yoke must be easy; our burden must be light; our souls must be at rest. No Apostle covered so much ground as Paul, yet so modest was his equipment that when he reached Rome he had to ask Timothy to bring him a cloak all the way from Troas, because he needed it, while the parchments of this greatest theologian could be carried in a knapsack. He had no library, no jointures (except with the Saviour), no title-deeds (except to eternal life), no endowments (save the unsearchable riches). His only paraphernalia was *content.*

John's message, though very simple, thus had great results. We do not know whether all the Apostles gave up their private fortunes—each was responsible to the Master; but Peter and Andrew and the Boanerges left their fishing, while Matthew resigned his appointment in the Civil Service. The money on which these friends lived was handed to Judas Iscariot, who carried it for them in his bag; and so taught us that, if we would associate with Jesus in His work, we must regard ourselves, not as the owners but as the trustees of what we are held to possess.

In the Early Church they also sold their possessions, and by establishing a common fund, applied their property to human need, and so put it to the fullest use. The rich congregation helped the poor, and Paul made a special journey to Jerusalem in order to convey thither the gifts of the wealthier communities. Thus was laid the foundation of modern insurance, which is a pool in property to meet special risks, and an expression in finance of God's care for the individual. In the Roman Empire there was no system like this;

it is essentially Christian, and based on the theory that if we pay, as premium, what, like the coat, we do not at the moment need, we shall, in the future, never be reduced to rags.

Co-workers with God.

Again and again Jesus devoted Himself to teaching us what is meant by money. He condemned as unprofitable the servant who laid up his loan in a napkin, and denied the owner's right to increment. The man's prudence, like his napkin, was meant for use, not waste. But He held that all profit belongs absolutely to the one Capitalist, and in due course must be handed back to Him. Not that He takes it out of the business, for none of God's material gifts leaves this world; on the contrary, He would reinvest the product of human effort for the benefit of the whole human race. As, in our work, we are trustees for Him; so, in our wealth, does He become, as it were, Trustee for us. Father and children are co-workers together.

Jesus fully understood the problems of Labor. He knew that while some men only work for one hour a day, others toil through the burden and heat; but He still lays it down that wages should be adjusted, not to the services rendered, since these are a duty to God rather than the employer, but to the needs of the worker. Each man receives the same penny, and rightly, because each has the same body to support, and the same family to feed. In the Old Testament, what they tried to establish was a standard rate of property: every man his vine, and every man his fig-tree. It broke down, because so many men, having called the vine and the fig-tree their own, wanted two vines and two fig-trees. Jesus took over our

property, and substituted what trade-unions call a standard rate of pay which was to be sufficient for the day, but without margin for accumulation. Since the penny a day met every need, nothing was added for overtime, even when it was undoubtedly prolonged. Not that He ignored even that matter. The reason why some men had to work all day and all night was that other men stood idle in the market-place, and Jesus accepts their plea that they were idle because no one had hired them. Overtime and unemployment were thus, mutually, cause and effect; and by giving to each man a penny whether he worked long or little, our Lord invoked a public opinion which called upon each man—in our War phrase—"to do his bit." The idle man, whether he be among the unemployed or the paupers, is, in fact, a charge upon the State; and the unemployed should be offered, not charity, or sympathy, or criticism, but an opportunity of toil. It was Jesus who thus first advised a labor exchange.

To many people, thrift is a virtue because it implies self-control in the present and foresight for the future. But if Jesus had substituted a bank balance for a Father's care, His teaching would have excluded nine out of ten wage-earners. He was against laying up treasures on earth, because He realized that all property is liable, first, to moth and rust, by which are meant the depreciation that results inevitably from postponed use; and, second, to theft, with violence, like war. We read, too, of the farmer whose barns were full, but who did not sow his surplus corn or sell it for bread, so as to relieve the market, but pulled down his barns, which was waste of property, in order to build greater, which was waste of work; yet overlooked his own health. This financier was a fool, because he

only thought of his assets; forgetting his liabilities, which included a mortgage on his soul, due to a sleepless Creditor, who foreclosed that very night after business hours. Wealth unspent made the rich man a miser.

Dives and Lazarus.

Dives, on the other hand, though rich, was not such a miser. He fared sumptuously every day, and was clad in purple and fine linen, so enjoying his money. And Lazarus did not ask to share these pleasures; with the ever-amazing patience of the very poor, he would have been content with the mere crumbs which were thrown away, then as now, in lavish households. Dives did not drive Lazarus from his door; he simply ignored the man, and the very dogs—what the French aristocrats called the *canaille*—were kinder to him, licking his sores, which attentions may have been imperfect as Red Cross work, but implied an intimate personal sympathy. Surfeit and starvation both ended fatally, and we are told, as a fact of importance, that Dives was buried. There was quite a funeral. But what Lazarus thought of was the sequel to his unmentioned grave. In his poverty he had learnt the lessons of Abraham, who wandered forth alone to be the friend of God, and into Abraham's bosom he went.

Dives went to hell, and it was the hell of his own making. He was tormented by the flame of remorse. His only thought was Lazarus, still as far from him in death as he had been in life. He envied the very dogs, and begged for one drop of water to moisten his own tongue. Yet he knew that his offense was against a Greater than Lazarus, and it was to father Abraham

that he appealed. He had his answer. This earthly drama, he discovered, is but a part of the whole. There is not one wrong that shall fail of being righted. The beggar who sustains evil without complaint is richer than the millionaire who receives good without gratitude. And if we make a distance between ourselves and others, that becomes fixed as a gulf; nor can even Lazarus, the man we have wronged, bridge the chasm. He cannot forgive us. He is not our judge. Nor can he warn us.

For thousands of years men have seen these social inequalities, but they are not stirred thereby. If they will not believe Moses and the Prophets, if Lazarus in rags does not convince them, neither will Lazarus emerging—as a Lazarus did emerge—in his grave-clothes from the tomb.

XIV

GREATER THAN THE GREATEST

John the Baptist and Christ—Resurrection, not Transmigration—Modern Application of John's Teaching.

AS he appeared to the Evangelists, John the Baptist was, next to our Lord, the most illustrious personage of his time. And the Evangelists were right, for beneath this towering figure the great ones of the Roman Empire sink into glittering mediocrity. On John alone did our Lord pronounce a panegyric, and this, even in cold print, stirs us with an irresistible crescendo. What was John? A *reed,* shaken by the wind of opinion? A *man,* clothed in soft raiment? Such men are seen, not in king's dungeons, where the Baptist was to die, but in king's palaces, where his murderers reigned. A *prophet*—with vision? Nay, *more than a prophet,* since he saw his vision come true. For among men born of women was *none greater* than he.

A reed, a man, a prophet, more than a prophet, none greater—what a ladder of praise! Yet, standing even on its topmost rung, John had to reach far upwards if he was to unloose the shoe-latchet of his Master. "Stoop down" to do that! Why, of that very stooping he was unworthy, since it would

imply a previous equality. John knew that he must raise his arms high above his head and all its thoughts if he was to grasp Christ's feet, scarred as they were with service, and torn, as they would be, with suffering. John was humble, courageous, honest, self-less, but the pathos of his career lies in this—that he was eager, not *happy,* in his mission. He did not *enter* the Kingdom of Heaven, and the least in that Kingdom is therefore greater than he. Saul, breathing out threatenings and slaughter, was, as a man, despicable beside the Baptist preaching a change of heart. But John in prison, undaunted yet discouraged, does not compare with what Paul became, the calm and contented captive of the Lord, ready to live or die, in poverty or in abundance, because Here and Hereafter were to him, in one word, CHRIST.

John the Baptist and Christ.

The waiting multitudes seemed to know that, by some mysterious destiny, they were part of a crisis in the affairs of man. Though Jesus was still hidden, they expected a Messiah; though He had not died, they talked of resurrection. From Jerusalem a deputation of priests and Levites—John's tribe—forgetting Bethlehem and their Bible, put to the Baptist the blunt question whether he was the Christ—and would have taken his "yes" for an answer! He knew how sorely the world needed a Saviour, but he had to declare that the Saviour must be Someone else. No one realized more clearly than John that the Unitarian Christ—however gracious, however strong —was impossible.

This greatest of men, surveying the task before him, instinctively deduced the Divinity of the now imminent

Redeemer. When they suggested that he was baptizing without authority, he turned and rent his own rite. What was water, that flows off a man and leaves him as before? The real Christ would baptize with fire—fire blown on man with the Breath of God, to consume and to purify—leaving the wheat only on the threshing floor, because the chaff, drawn off by that same Spirit, is utterly destroyed. The "burning and shining light"—as Jesus called John—thus began by thinking of the Christ as like unto himself, a second Baptist, but Greater; and it was only when he held Jesus in his arms and baptized Him, that his view changed; and, remembering the altar that his father, Zacharias, knew so well, he spoke of the Lamb of God. The truth broke on him that the Christ would be not the Consumer merely, but Himself the Consumed—who is not content to denounce the sin of the world, but does more—takes it away.

For there was this difference between the audience which gathered around John and the crowds that thronged Jesus. John spoke to the scribes and Pharisees, the tax-gatherers and soldiers, the governing classes, who had two coats and well-filled purses, and were "worth winning." The evils that he dealt with were pride and selfishness—the sins of success. Jesus drew to Him the failures—the blind, and they received their sight; the lame, and they walked; the lepers, and they were cleansed; the deaf, the dumb, the dead. And when John, grown doubtful in his jail, sent two messengers to inquire if He were indeed the Expected One, He answered, as final evidence, that *the poor* had the good tidings preached to them. To advise, denounce, condemn, as John did, was good; but to heal, uplift, and forgive is better. And while John

died as witness against the sins of a monarch, Jesus died as sacrifice for the sins of a thief. The one was Justice, the Other was also Love; and where Justice left the culprit to his fate, Love carried the criminal into paradise.

If John was not the Christ, then, thought the people, he must be Elijah or some other prophet, risen from the dead—anyone but himself. Jesus, in His turn, was said to be Isaiah, the man of hope, or Jeremiah, the man of tears. When the Baptist's very flesh had been severed in twain by the sword of the executioner, and his body buried by his disciples, Herod trembled lest in Jesus his victim should be again stalking abroad; and the people who had heard John gladly, rejoicing in his light, now shared the superstitions of their king.

Resurrection, not Transmigration.

Nor is there any evidence more artlessly convincing than this—that popular sentiment, in identifying our Saviour with His forerunner, instinctively attributed a resurrection to them both. These errors faded away noiselessly with the dawn. Men and women were right in rejecting the Sadducee negation of any life, actual and demonstrable, beyond the grave. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is, not as the Sadducees imagined, the God of the dead, but of the living. So far, the people were not deceived. But, on the other hand, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob each remains himself and no other. There has been no transmigration of their souls. The inexhaustible God has no need to reissue old coinage from His mint. When Herod on his judgment-seat first set eyes on Christ, he knew that here was no ghost of John the Baptist. And when Moses and Elijah stood on the

mountain with Him, it was in their own persons, not as anyone else. The widow's son at Nain, when awakened from his bier, was still her son. When her funeral was interrupted, the little girl came back to Jairus, her father, as his daughter. Lazarus, when they unbound his grave-clothes, was still the brother of Martha and Mary, and shared their meals; while Dorcas, when revived, continued her sewing-parties. These people did not become younger when they were called back, nor did they enjoy over again any of their past opportunities. They only resumed their former existence, with their former powers, and not for one moment did they and their souls part company. Not one of them is heard of afterwards; all of them ultimately died a natural death. And they are appointed to teach us, first, that God is absolute Master of our days—to give or withhold as He wills; secondly, that a bodily resurrection, as Hezekiah discovered when his health was restored, adds nothing to our happiness, usefulness, or insight into truth; and thirdly, that the solemnity of this present lies precisely in this—that we cannot, by any miracle, recover one instant of it. In the broad daylight of such truth, we should test every fresh emergence of necromancy, spiritualism, or ghost-lore; on psychic phenomena the Lord Jesus said the first and last word.

With failure already overshadowing his success, and no Messiah as yet revealed to him, John still went on daily with his work, patiently deciding the difficult issues which were submitted to him. He was a people's magistrate, stern yet trusted, whose brief, clear verdicts always dealt, not with the past, which John knew not how to pardon, but with the future, in which he still dared to hope. Of his followers, they whose

conscience gave most trouble were the inland revenue officers who collected the taxes, and the soldiers who enforced the laws. There, at the base of the Roman Empire, lay corruption and cruelty; and since violence against some other person can be more easily condoned than an offense on property that is one's own, the dread of the soldier was as nothing compared with the detestation of the publican. John did not require, either of the publican or of the soldier, that he should give up his calling; but he laid down rules by which such callings should be tested. What the publicans had to do was to levy correct taxes, no more and no less; while to the soldiers John did not say, Lay down your arms. He recognized that in the solar system force is an instrument of God, which means that an especial responsibility rests on those who invoke or apply it. There must be no violence to the individual, no false accusations, no plunder as an addition to rations. War is to be waged as a strict and judicial assertion of equity, without passion, profit, aggression, or diplomatic subterfuge. Civilian life must be respected. Mutiny must be repressed. But the idea that, because war is terrible, therefore a soldier is a worse man than an unarmed Pharisee—to take one instance—receives no warrant in the Gospels. The Pharisee is often denounced, the soldier never—so completely did our Lord and His forerunner judge of the outward act by its inward motive.

The strange thing is that such teaching should have been heard so gladly, not only by the multitude who steadily reverenced John's memory, but by the classes specially rebuked. To the publicans, the vista of honesty opened up an avenue that led back to self-respect, and many of them were baptized. We read,

too, of more than one righteous centurion who applied John's precepts to his relations with the subject Jews.

Modern Application of John's Teaching.

To this day, the careers of men like General Gordon and Lord Kitchener illustrate what may be achieved in Asiatic lands by John's code of financial correctitude, backed by strict military discipline. All that is great in British control of India and Egypt and Uganda resolves itself, politically, to the wisdom of John the Baptist. In every land, he who was the forerunner of our Lord stands forth as a champion of public right against all such hideous allurements as those of Tammany Hall. For States and Municipalities, for democracies and despotisms, this last appeal of Moses and the Prophets is a true word of exhortation. Yet, in the deeper sense, it failed. Those publicans alone entered the Kingdom who, like Matthew and Zacchæus and the crowds that heard the parables, came from John to Jesus. They did not become honest about money until they learnt to value their souls above the hundredth sheep, above the tenth piece of silver, and above the half of the Father's material substance. To Matthew, the receipt of custom was not worth one day with Christ.

And the soldiers—what of them? Three years later, they surrounded the Redeemer, mocked Him, scourged Him, platted a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and in the very presence of His mother seized His garments as their booty. There was violence, false accusation, plunder; and even when He was dead, they plunged a spear into His side. Every law laid down by John was set aside.

Yet His love has captured even the soldiers. The centurion whose orderly was sick was the first man to understand Christ's power over disease, and his view of command and obedience settles for ever the controversy over miracles. God has this authority—and that is enough. The other centurion at the Cross settled for ever the question of Christ's Divinity. He looked on this Man, now dead—saw through the infinite shame of His crucifixion; was not deceived by the hideousness of the scene, but clearly distinguished between the thieves whose bones were broken and their Companion, who died of a broken heart. "Truly, this was the Son of God"; and from that testimony the buccaneer, the freebooter, the mercenary, the raider, has risen, transfigured, into the Soldier of the Cross, the Knightly Warrior, who fights, not to conquer but to defend, and is happier when he dies than when he kills.

XV

THE BAPTISM OF THE REDEEMER

The Sinless Saviour—The Dove and the Lamb—The Insight of Christ.

CROWDED with events as was our Lord's brief life, He was never hurried; not one hasty or ill-considered remark fell from His lips; nor do we once read that He ran, as if late for His duty. When His "time" or "hour" came—to quote one of His favorite expressions—He was always in His place, and His every decision was right, not only in itself, but as an example of providential punctuality. The daughter of Jairus was at the point of death, but Jesus could still spare a word and His own energy, for healing the woman who touched the hem of His garment. And He devoted two whole days to the issues involved in bringing back Lazarus, His intimate friend, from that life beyond, where Lazarus would be free of pain and sorrow. Others hastened to Him—fell at His feet—beseeching Him—impatiently drove the children from Him—talked excitedly about Him, as did the leper—woke Him suddenly, when the boat was sinking—and were constantly betrayed into thoughtless blunders. But even on those days, when He had

no leisure, not so much as to eat, He was ever active, yet ever calm.

Standing unknown among John's disciples, for many weeks He could ponder the evidences of that great man's success and failure. The decision that He then took was as momentous as it was unexpected. Silently, He came forward, and offered Himself, not as John's Master, to teach, but as John's Disciple, for baptism. John did not then realize what was meant by Jesus as Messiah. But of Jesus, his Kinsman, the Son of Man and Elder Brother of the family at Nazareth, he knew enough to be astounded at the situation thus disclosed.

The Sinless Saviour.

For us, the question is how sinful men may enter the Kingdom of Heaven. At His baptism, our Lord demonstrated how a Sinless Man was to live within the Empire of Rome. Evil is so engrained in our race that we must allow for it in all our institutions, so that we cannot have justice without prisons, homes without bolts and bars, or prayer without confession. Jesus could not attend a synagogue without hearing a penitential psalm; and at His birth His most blessed Body was, as a matter of course, subjected to a rite which Paul did not impose on the humblest Gentile. On His behalf, as well as her own, Mary, as mother, made in the Temple the prescribed offering for sin. In reality, she was inaugurating a drama at which, we are told, the angels themselves gaze in amazement. What Jesus sacrificed for us was not birth alone, or property, or home, but what a good man values most of all, His reputation. In Paul's historic phrase, He who knew no sin, was *made sin* for us.

No wonder that He became a Man of sorrows and

acquainted with grief. Constantly, they accused Him of keeping evil company. Constantly, they charged Him with blasphemy. They told Him that He was a glutton and a wine-bibber. They held that He broke the Sabbath. They declared that He had a very devil within Him. They suggested that He was insane. And many of those who, like His brethren, were attached to Him by special ties, were inclined to believe a part, at any rate, of the slanders. All this suffering He could have avoided if, like the priest and the Levite, He had left mankind, wounded by the way, and passed by on the other side. Instead of this, He became "at one" with us, accompanied us to our Jericho, left His Jerusalem behind, and paid our bill at the inn. This was, in faint parable, what theologians call His Atonement. And of that Atonement His baptism was preliminary.

The first man who felt a difficulty about the Atonemen was not the modern freethinker, but John the Baptist, who thought as freely as any freethinker, and could not understand why Jesus should be baptized. The second man was Peter, who bluntly rebuked the Saviour when He talked about going up to die at Jerusalem. And the third man was Paul, who would say nothing on the subject until he had spent three years in the deserts of Arabia, meditating over it. None of these men, each of whom has left his mark on history, dismissed the Atonement lightly, or received it superstitiously. Slowly but surely, they recognized Incarnate Love, and worshiped.

By refusing baptism, Jesus could, as it were, have asserted His sinlessness. He was the one Man who had a right, without boasting, to use the Pharisee's words, and to thank God that He was not as other

men are. And John would have upheld Him. Though He had not yet uttered one syllable of all His wonderful teaching or performed one miracle, it was not the Divine Disciple who confessed His "need" when He applied for baptism, but the Baptist himself. At that moment our Lord could have taken John's place, and eclipsed all his glory; but He humbled Himself, and became obedient, not indeed to immediate death, yet to the river Jordan, which, symbolically, meant the same. Because He had done no wrong, therefore, unlike the multitudes, He had nothing to confess; but His very innocence expressed itself in His readiness to submit all that He had been and done to the judgment of His Father, and to be satisfied with no acquittal, save by the Highest. Among men, He had, as we have seen, grown in favor. John already worshiped Him. But He took not one step forward until He heard with His own ears that God was Himself well pleased—that He had fulfilled His trust, not only as Son of Mary, but as the Beloved Son of a Heavenly Father. To be righteous is not enough. He must fulfill righteousness, absorb it into Himself, so that henceforth we may love what is right, which means what is humble and good and obedient, by loving Him, in whom these things lived.

The Dove and the Lamb.

Then it was that John's view of Jesus changed. He saw the Spirit descending on our Lord, not, as he had imagined, in flames, which happened to the Apostles at Pentecost, but in bodily form as a Dove, which, to his priestly mind, meant the bird of sacrifice, devoted to death, for iniquities not her own. To John, the symbol was as legible as, let us say, the Royal Standard flutter-

ing over Windsor Castle would be to us. We should say at once that the King was in residence; and John, seeing the Dove, declared that here was One who should be led like a lamb—the Lamb of God—to the slaughter, bearing away the sins of the world. In one tremendous phrase, John summed up the vision of Isaiah and the terrible ritual of the scapegoat, drawn forth by man, loaded with man's guilt, to die alone, beyond the city walls. John's words were a flash of intense lightning, transfiguring the ancient ceremonies with a fearful and present meaning. Such a Man, submitting to such a baptism, could not fail to go much farther along the valley of humiliation.

Most of us know how Paul was changed when he saw Christ, but we do not appreciate the similar upheaval in John's character which was wrought by the mere fact of our Lord's constant and sympathetic presence. We hear no more of his denunciations, just though they were. Even the baptism by fire, noble as was that truth, was overshadowed. It was the heroic submissiveness of Jesus that captured John's strong soul. He spent his days, saying simply, "Behold the Lamb of God"; and he was not satisfied until his followers did behold. Andrew and the other John went after Jesus, and at His invitation spent their first evening with Him. Andrew at once told his brother Simon that he had found the Christ, and brought him to Jesus. Our Saviour claimed the man, by changing his name—not that the change was immediate; it was, for the moment, prophecy, and Simon again returned to his fishing. Jesus Himself found Philip, who lived at Bethsaida; and as His ministry was to be in Galilee, where Philip would be useful, He took him from John and the Jordan, and

thus, quietly yet inexorably, asserted His paramount claim on every disciple of every human teacher. Philip discovered his friend, Nathaniel, and shared with him the news, basing his message on what especially weighed with an Israelite like Nathaniel—namely, the law and the prophets—and Nathaniel promptly raised a demurrer, namely, Nazareth. Apparently, he knew nothing, whether of Bethlehem or of Egypt, nor did Jesus argue the point of geography. Sweeping all that aside, He welcomed the heart in which was no guile, and Nathaniel, in words now immortal, exclaimed, "Whence knowest Thou me?"

The Insight of Christ.

It was not Philip who told Jesus about Nathaniel. To Him, who loved to the uttermost—for comprehension is the eyesight of love—seeing a man was knowing a man, and Nathaniel, sitting under the shade of a fig-tree, was understood from his leisure. And Nathaniel, on his side, thought that the character-reading of Jesus—itself a condemnation of palmistry, phrenology, and all other fortune-telling—was itself a miracle. The Saviour was Rabbi—Son of God—King of Israel. And the Lord did not deny it. On the contrary, for the first of many times He answered with that "Verily, verily—Amen, Amen, I say unto you"—which was in every case a declaration of supreme authority. Nathaniel would see heaven open, and God's messengers ascending from and descending to the Son of Man. That was the good which would arise out of Nazareth and return thither. That was the new geography of faith.

John the beloved, Simon Peter, Andrew, Philip, Nathaniel—these all were taught by the Baptist, and

came from him to Jesus. So did the baptized publicans. Nor was there one hint that John would found a rival sect to the Church. Years later, at Ephesus, Apollos and other Jews only knew John's baptism, but they readily accepted Paul's fuller gospel; whereas the Jews, in the same city, who did not follow John, hardened their hearts against Jesus. After John's burial, it was to Jesus that his followers came; and from Him they learnt, not to repent and confess merely, but to pray.

And John accepted the position. He realized that as his Divine Disciple increased, so must he, the human teacher, decrease. The other day, I counted the churches in London that are dedicated to the Baptist and found how few they are. St. George himself is a more popular, if somewhat mythical, patron. Jesus had stood and listened to John. And John's "joy was fulfilled" when, in his turn, he stood and listened to Jesus. As he listened, he uttered the majestic parable in which Jesus is the Bridegroom, while those who love Him are the Bride, and John is the friend of the Bridegroom, who rejoices only in Another's joy. It was a singularly tender simile in the mouth of the fierce and lonely man who had thundered against the generation of vipers, but the words were noted by one at least of the Baptist's listeners. The other John, who wrote the Gospel, was gripped by this great idea of the Church as "the Bride," which filled his mind even when heaven was revealed to him. As for the Baptist, energy and assertiveness mellowed into humility, and having been faithful in rebuke, he rose to the grander faithfulness which is unto death.

XVI

THE REDEEMER IS TEMPTED

Forty Days in the Wilderness—Answering Temptation—The Enemy's Sleepless Hostility.

WHEN Milton wrote his *Paradise Regained,* he only showed that genius, even like his, can add nothing to the simple yet formidable prose which records our Saviour's temptation in the wilderness. One would have thought that the Spirit like a Dove which rested on Him would have called Him at once to His appointed career of help and healing; but what happened was that this very Spirit drove Him forth, suddenly and inexorably, to the dangers and privations of an empty desert, where was not one body to be healed or soul to be saved.

It was not enough to submit, as Christ did, to John's baptism. Such was His love for His first friend that He must share in His own person John's deepest experiences. He must brave John's solitary life. He must endure John's loneliness. From which it follows that the explorer, marooned on an iceberg; the criminal, thinking things over in his cell; the sailor, maintaining his wintry vigil; the soldier, tired of the trench; the missionary, toiling through the night and praying for a dawn delayed; the student, who sees

self writ large across his every page—every man, every woman, thus isolated, may know that the Lord Jesus also lived where no human comfort could sustain Him. He suffered hunger, as on the Cross He suffered thirst, and was so utterly neglected by mankind that few would have known whether He lived or died. In a word, the Lord seemed to be quite unimportant, just a forgotten unit among millions, a single line in small print among the missing; lacking even John's locusts and wild honey—yet still illuminating that amazing, almost defiant declaration: *Though He slay Me, yet will I trust in Him.* It was a foretaste of His whole life; He was amid the wild beasts—that was His environment—but angels ministered unto Him. On the one hand raged His circumstances, but within was peace.

Forty Days in the Wilderness.

The world is too much with us, and sometimes we think that by leaving it behind we must perforce find God. The monk, the nun, and the anchorite so arrange their lives. It was after forty days spent thus in the mountain that Moses saw the glory of Jehovah and received His law. It was after forty days in the desert that Elijah heard the still small voice. And Moses, with his laws, and Elijah, with his vision, were our Saviour's chosen companions when He was transfigured on the uplands. Jesus did not ignore the secret room where, with the door closed, souls submit themselves to God. Teaching us that no one is great who cannot be his own intimate friend, He would often spend a whole night alone upon the mountain. But He destroyed asceticism as an end in itself. For Moses, as an individual, to receive the

law was, after all, nothing; for law, by its nature, assumes a society. Better break the tables to fragments if the people are still to worship the golden calf. When Elijah heard God's voice, it was not for himself alone. It was that he might inspire others—Hazael and Jehu and Elisha. The transfigured Christ, with His countenance aflame with glory, must needs cure the epileptic boy. And when He lay prostrate in the desert, His body famished, His every sense vanquished, what He discovered was, not the outward calm of the cloister, but the very Devil himself. How terrible that experience was to Him we know from His prayer: "Lead us not into temptation, and deliver us from the Evil One." "Watch and pray," said He, "lest ye enter into temptation." The weakness of the flesh, the willingness of the spirit—He tested them both. He was perfected through sufferings. Vigilance and worship are the price of victory.

And by His wisdom, so costly in its winning, He makes it clear to us, first, that He is with us always, even when we are most alone; and, secondly, that, where possible, we should do His work in association with one another. He sent forth His disciples, not singly, but in couples, that the strong brother might be at hand to help the weak when he stumbles. If things are desired, or if things have to be decided, He suggests that two or three should gather together, when He will be in the midst, bringing every private judgment into unity with His own. And when He rose from the dead, He sent His disciples, not into the wilderness, which He knew so well, but into Galilee, where service—the best eternal safeguard against temptation—was to be done. After His ascension, His disciples had to face the future without His bodily

presence, but they did not spend their forty days in the desert, each by himself; they assembled in an upper room, like a family, and so awaited the tongues of fire. There was safety, there was helpfulness, in numbers.

Before the War broke out, many doubted whether there was a Devil. They talked about environment and heredity, but they denied that Evil, like Good (or God), is personal; and gradually God faded away too. Nowadays, we are not quite so assured of our negations. Jesus did not argue about the existence of Satan—He did not ridicule Beelzebub, Prince of Demons. The good angel and the bad angel were to Him as actual as you are or as I am. Living as we live in a vast spiritual universe, He had eyes to see how its limitless spaces are densely peopled by souls, immortal, yet not always human, with wills of their own, which strive with man, and even strive with God. We have seen that every child has his appointed angel, and that twelve legions of angels were at the Christ's immediate command, even when He was under arrest. Similarly, legions of demons—spiritual in essence, though wicked in aim—encamp within the heart, irresistible until a Stronger drive them forth—sifting men, as Satan sifted Peter, like wheat, and Judas, like the chaff. Modern history has been described as the failure of Christianity, but it is rather a panorama of astonishing conflict—grim, incessant, pitiless—in which Christ helps us, because, amid poison gas, and all the trickery of warfare, He, with eagle eye and steady finger, has located, once for all, the Arch-Enemy. He drew the fire, and, by His heroic reconnaissance, unmasked for all time the entrenched batteries of iniquity.

Answering Temptation.

We marvel at Verdun—how persistent and varied the attack, how costly the defense! And as Verdun has been of value only as the symbol of France, so it was the soul, worth more to Him than all the world, for which our Lord fought with unflinching courage. One feels, as one reads, how everything depended on the issue of that battle. Thrust and counter-thrust were leveled with incomparable skill. The Devil constantly maintained a bold and varied offensive. Our Lord, as constantly, was ready with an exactly direct counter-attack. All His Divine knowledge, ready for instant use, was available as munitions of war. There was not one page in Holy Writ that did not furnish Him with a high explosive, the thunder of which reverberates to this day. He did not waste one moment on dates and authorship, on alleged discrepancies and erasures in manuscripts, and such-like bow-and-arrow tactics. He took the words as written —placed Himself as Scholar on the level of anybody who spends sixpence on a Bible and reads it—and handling texts, as an accomplished duelist uses his rapier, He parried instantly every stroke.

Though a battle of words, and words alone, here was no sham fight. To Christ, words condemn and words justify us. It is the word of the diplomat that sheds the blood of millions. It was Christ's refusal to compromise with the world that set the world against Him; and with the flesh, that caused His flesh to be rent; and with the Devil, that brought Him inevitably to the day when, with Him, was quenched the Light of the World, leaving the Prince of Darkness for three hours supreme. It is a true instinct that leads the

bigot to burn the Bible, and the despot to suppress freedom of speech. The thought which leaps to the lips determines the fate, not of mind alone, but of money, and health, and thrones, and empires—hearths, happiness, heaven, and hell. Others rule with a rod of iron; our Lord has been able to govern us with the rod of His mouth.

Against those words of His the Devil recoiled, three times baffled. Yet, throughout this opening campaign, Satan showed that he knew precisely what was the prize to be won. His blows were aimed, not at our Lord's body, but rather at His soul. He did not enter into the wild beasts, as his demons entered into the Gadarene swine, and cause them to attack Jesus. The food with which he tempted Him was not poisoned food, except to the immortal part of Him. Satan did not try himself to cast down the Saviour from the pinnacle of the Temple. Nor did he desire that our Lord should be dashed in pieces. And when he asked Jesus to worship him, he did not threaten Him with death if He refused. All he wanted was that the soul should go astray. Given that great success, he would have been glad to see the Son of God well fed, well clothed, healthy, popular, and even philanthropic. To this extent, if I may say so, Jesus and His antagonist met on common ground, and understood one another. They realized, both of them, the paramount value of the unseen life. Neither cared for anything else.

The Enemy's Sleepless Hostility.

Reserving, for the present, some words about the particular temptations, let me here conclude by reviewing, broadly, the strategy which began at Bethle-

hem and ended at Calvary. The Prince of the Power of the Air worked throughout, not directly, and, as it were, in his own person, but by instigating or influencing men, so that at one point Peter himself was addressed by our Lord as "Satan." The first stroke was an attempted assassination at Bethlehem. The second was the long oblivion of Egypt and Nazareth. The third was the desperate conflict in the wilderness, after which the Devil left Jesus for a time. In the years that followed, we can detect frequent traces of the enemy's sleepless hostility—how men tried to make Jesus an earthly king; sought to dissuade Him from going up to Jerusalem to die; slept in the garden when, in agony, He prayed that the cup might pass from Him, but only as God willed; and railed on Him when, on the Cross, He cried out that God also had forsaken Him.

During this conflict, slowly but surely, Jesus forced the Devil back from the spiritual to the physical plane. We see how, as His soul was found to be impregnable, His body was drawn into danger. At Nazareth, they tried to hurl Him from a precipice. In the Temple, they took up stones to stone Him. More than once, they sent to arrest Him, but dared not do it in the daylight. And, with all this going on around Him, our Lord told His disciples not to fear those who could only attack the body, but to fear Him who could destroy body *and soul* in hell. Whence it follows that, in every age, His followers, few or many, have been ready to suffer even torture for His sake, and this joyfully, because they have known that from the realms of evil thus closely confined to that which perishes the eternal in man has been finally liberated.

XVII

THE THREEFOLD CORD

Two "Ifs"—Two Trinities—The Heavenly Bread.

WHAT I notice first about these three temptations of Christ is their modern aspect. Though the Lord Jesus had been living a trustful, obedient, and reverent life, yet, by an "if," there came a suggestion that would change everything to doubt, self-will, and pride. When to-day we discuss His divinity, we sometimes think that we are confronted by a new problem. But the entire range of this, as of other controversies, was first traveled by the Son of God Himself. No misgivings of ours are more baffling than those which He overcame. And He did not face them as we do, with millions worshiping Him as Lord. It was in the wilderness alone, with one book of the Old Testament as His support, that, so to speak, He wrestled for His Sonship. Three years later, the struggle, ever intermittent, was renewed in all its violence, for in His dying moments they hurled at Him that same "if" which He heard in the desert—calling on Him, not indeed to cast Himself from a pinnacle of the Temple, but to come down from the Cross, and so prove that He was Son of God. When He said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"; when

again He said, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit"—another of these texts that denote the Trinity—He gave, with His life, the final answer to those who would deny His birthright. And in thus heroically resisting the Unitarianism of His day, He fought our battle as well as His own. It is in Him that we return to our Father, and recover our place, consciously, in the family of God. He died in order to bring many sons to His own glory.

Two "Ifs."

In appealing to our Lord with an "if," the Devil was attacking One who was master of logic as of every other mental process. That little word was with Him a favorite; but where the Tempter used it to destroy, He used it to achieve. When Christ said "if," He put His foot firmly on the rung of the ladder, leaned His whole weight on it, and so mounted upwards; but in Satan's mouth that "if" was uttered in hope that the rung would break, and all that depends on it would fall to the ground. "If," argued Jesus, "I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto Me." It seemed a great result to follow from one single crucifixion, but history has shown that the effect has followed the cause. Jesus, lifted up, does draw all men unto Him. "If I go away," to My Father, "I will come again and receive you unto Myself." Once more, it was not obvious that His disappearance would promote that reunion, but we now see that His reasoning ran deeper than ours. Because in the Body He has gone away, therefore we are nearer to God, and He draws us thither. Moreover, He would have us be consistent, scientific in our friendship for Him. "If," said He, "ye love Me, keep My commandments"— than which

no syllogism could be clearer or more challenging. Utterly different from these sayings of our Lord was the Devil's: "If Thou be the Son of God——"

From these temptations we learn that evil is strong because it is complex. The good is a trinity and so is the bad—a threefold cord, as the Preacher said, which is not easily broken. Matthew and Luke each describe the temptations, but in different orders, as if the strands of the rope were twisted, yet without losing their identity, which is eternal. At the beginning of time, Eve was tempted by the ideas that the tree was good for food, that is the flesh; pleasant to the eyes, which means the world; and flattering to the mind, which is the Devil. In the Garden of Eden, you have thus the world, the flesh, the Devil, these three, in one act of transgression. Thousands of years later, John the Apostle wrote similarly about the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—again, the same three references to our bodies which feel; our circumstances which we see; and our minds in which we live. Our Lord, in His prayer, used to-day in empires wider far than Rome, opens up the same thoughts. "Give us this day our daily bread," said He; and so sustain our bodies. "Lead us not into temptation"; and so safeguard us in our surroundings. "And deliver us from the Evil One"; who attacks and would destroy the soul. Such strange and apparently undesigned correspondences show that, in His temptations, our Lord touched the very secret springs of all human trouble. Some will fail by self-indulgence—they drink, or are vicious, or take drugs, or gamble; others exercise a rigid control over themselves in these matters, but are enslaved to the world, yearn for self-advertisement, and depend for

happiness on social position; while there are others again who care nothing for creature comforts and nothing for society, but are satisfied with the final luxury of pride. They live hard and die poor, but they worship the Devil. Thus, ranged before us, rises the whole hierarchy of tempted men—first, the drunkard and the vicious; secondly, the millionaire, the monarch, the politician, the champion wrestler, the actor, the popular preacher, the great official; and thirdly, the scholar, the inquisitor, the stoic, the extremist. To us, the first class alone seems disreputable; the second is, on the whole, envied and respected; while the last includes the saints! But, to the Lord Jesus, it was easier to deal with the publican and the harlot than with the ninety-and-nine just persons who need no repentance; while one of His most pointed warnings was against those genuinely pious persecutors who, in killing His followers, would think that they were doing God service. The Devil is always dangerous, but never more dangerous than when he appears as an angel of light.

Two Trinities.

The trinity of evil and the trinity of good thus correspond, not by any artificial theological convention, but inevitably, by experience, by fact. When Satan urged Christ to turn the stones into bread, he denied that God, the Father, cares for His children. When he suggested that Jesus should cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the Temple, he was denying that God the Son would be His own revelation. And when he demanded that the Saviour should worship him, he sought to expel the Holy Spirit. Of the three cardinal virtues, faith was to be undermined,

hope was to be shattered, and love was to be poisoned. Nor, as we shall see, did Jesus ever forget the ordeal. I have shown how three positive petitions in His prayer recall His three temptations. So also do the beginning of that prayer and its conclusion. Worship the Devil? No, He answers; "Hallowed be Thy Name." Throw Myself from a pinnacle? No, again; let "Thy kingdom come," as it must come, without observation. Turn stones into bread? Once more, No; let "Thy will be done." And as the prayer draws to a close, we have, as a kind of *coda,* a declaration that God's must be the Kingdom—the destiny of man; the power—determining his circumstances; and the glory—demanding his reverence; for ever and ever; to which He adds *Amen*—His sign-manual, final and irrevocable.

The temptations gain in influence because they are so plausible. If a man be the child of God, then surely he has the right to turn stones into bread when he is starving! The revolutionary women who attacked Versailles did no more than this. Nations, living mainly at a week's notice, will ever listen when the Devil talks glibly about the bread ration. We are all apt to snatch at our food; to seize the profit which is not quite equitable; to speculate; to take unfair advantages. And sometimes what we call our bread includes many other things that are not really necessary; and we perish, not for lack of food, but by dread of reduced circumstances.

Jesus knows it all. Having Himself suffered hunger He was ever kind to those in like case. When the disciples fed themselves with corn on the Sabbath day, He defended them. Twice, He was the one to provide food for the people, who fainted because

they followed Him. The last of His miracles was to give a breakfast for the Apostles, who were tired with a weary night's fishing in which they caught nothing. And one of His tenderest sayings is the question whether our Heavenly Father would be so much more cruel than an earthly father as to give us stones—how it reminds us of the wilderness and the temptation! —*stones* for bread, or a scorpion—again the wilderness!—for a fish.

The Heavenly Bread.

It was thus with full knowledge that He tells us not to labor for the meat that perisheth. Men live, not merely by material bread, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. It was not a visionary who said this; the utterance came first through Moses, a practical statesman, on whom lay the responsibility for a commissariat that should suffice for an entire nation, advancing through a desert which is still almost impenetrable. And, when Jesus quoted the words, it was in no unreal sense, for He had studied the making of bread, and mentions all those orderly processes—the sowing, the reaping, the winnowing of the corn, the grinding, the kneading with leaven, and the very breaking of it with hands, at the Supper-table. And when the disciples, who had left Him wearily resting at the well of Samaria, returned to find Him refreshed, they learnt by actual observation that His meat was to do the will of His Father and finish His work. Duty did not make Him weaker, but stronger. He took no holiday, required no stimulant, was indifferent to tonics and pick-me-ups. "Master," said they, "eat"; they brought Him the bread; but they never forgot how, in taking it, He

spoke to them of the same heavenly food which sustained Him amid the mocking bowlders of the desert.

Men are too apt, everywhere, to regard themselves as soldiers of fortune, sent forth to forage in the world for food. Jesus teaches us that there is still manna, sent from Heaven, if we will be humble enough to gather it; there are ravens which will bring us morsels; there is the cruse of oil that is not exhausted; there are the loaves and fishes that multiply; there are the angels that come and minister to us. He who could (but would not) turn the stones into bread to feed Himself, gave His own Body to feed the world, that we may be satisfied, not with bread alone, but with Him, as the Word, imparted to us as we need, and so received—not a portion of the Word, but all of it—*every* word—a complete and perfect dietary, sufficient for all life—both here and hereafter, since it proceeds for us, and only for us, direct from the mouth of God, who loves us, who knows us, who has visited us. And as He forgot His hunger in feeding others, so does He ask us, like Peter, to show our love by feeding His lambs. He asks us, not once, nor twice, but thrice, because the need is urgent. The people faint for lack of that Living Bread.

XVIII

ON THE PINNACLE OF THE TEMPLE

The Way of Salvation—Christ the Hero—Christ and Bravado.

SEARCH the world, and you would not have found a loftier or more sacred position for the Son of God to occupy than the pinnacle of the Temple. He stood there, lonely and unapproachable, silent and motionless, like a sculptured saint on the portal of some ancient cathedral—safe from reproach or irreverence, ready to receive the devotion of mankind. Here was the ecclesiastical Christ, Divine yet solitary, only to be met at church, or by leave of the priests; and so far elevated above us that we cannot see Him clearly, or tell Him of our needs, still less feel His touch. The Devil would have frustrated our salvation if he had been able thus to treat our Lord as a prisoner of the Temple, rigid, erect, and helpless. To turn the living Jesus into a pillar of stone has been in every age a favorite diabolical device. The saints themselves have so suffered, and millions who revere St. Francis as an image can tell you little of St. Francis as a man.

How long our Lord waited on that pinnacle we do not know, for the crowds below did not once raise their eyes to Him; indeed, the precise mischief

with them was that they could not look upwards, but were of the earth, earthy, and had to see our Saviour face to face, if at all. Jesus did not shun publicity. He knew that, like the serpent in the wilderness, He must be "lifted up," and killed as if He were an accursed thing; but when He was so crucified, He was still near to the people whom He died to save. They could insult Him, hear what He said, speak to Him, offer Him vinegar to drink, and plunge a spear into His side. And as He climbed the Mountain of Transfiguration, He did not, like Moses, leave all His disciples behind, but took three of them with Him; and when He came to them amid the storm, He did not fly, like an angel, but walked *on* the water. It was a real storm and He really faced it. It was just because He left the pinnacle of the Temple that His influence spread in so many directions. On the pinnacle, He could not move one inch,—He was as impotent to save as a Crucifix,—but on the highways of life He could walk about—southwards. to Jerusalem, the place of religion; eastwards, to Jericho, where dwelt the lapsed masses; northwards, to Capernaum—the Manchester of Gennesaret; westwards, to Tyre and Sidon, the colonies by the ocean. He was familiar with Cana, where people were interested in a wedding, and with Nain, where they were attending a funeral. He visited Bethany, the village of home life, and thus was an example for all—that we should not speak of Him only in pulpit language, pompously, or with erudite phrases, keeping Him, as it were, to ourselves; nor display jealousy if commoner folk throng around Him and, in their own way, which may be less ceremonious than ours, make Him their own.

The Way of Salvation.

People are very slow to learn the wisdom of Jesus. Years later, there was one of His followers, St. Simeon Stylites, who still sought holiness on the top of a pillar. Others have tortured themselves with flagellation or the hair shirt, or have taken the Trappist vow of silence. In India there are thousands of fakirs who hope for God's kingdom in pain, extending their limbs until they wither, or subjecting themselves to hooks and nails and glowing metal. Jesus did not shrink from agony. In the garden, His sweat was as the blood which was so soon to flow from the thorns on His forehead. But He did not regard pain as an equivalent of life. The man who cut himself with stones was, to Him, like the priests of Baal who cut themselves with knives, not a saint but a demoniac, and He preferred that he should sit, clothed and in his right mind.

It is true that He said, "If thy hand offend thee, cut it off," and "if thine eye cause thee to stumble, pluck it out." Limbs are a peril except in so far as they serve the soul; and eyes are a snare, save as they let in the light. There is no salvation, as the Greeks thought, in athletics; no redemption in the beauty of muscle and tendon. On the other hand, our Lord had no need to lose either His hands or His eyes, since He constantly devoted them to His appointed service. It was with His hands that He blessed the children, broke the bread, raised the fallen, unstopped the ears of the deaf, and opened the eyes of the blind. And His own eyes—what wonders of sympathy and helpfulness and indignation did they not accomplish! Those eyes looked on the rich young ruler and revealed the love of the Master; and on Peter, who went forth,

broken yet redeemed, to weep bitterly. Our Lord reverenced all that His Father gave Him. He valued His Body and bore it with Him to the throne of God, there to render an account of it. It was the Creator's respect for the thing created. And, in Him, we also are delivered, on the one hand from the practice of persecuting the bodies of others, and, on the other hand, from the delusion that there is holiness in mutilating and torturing our own. What saves the body is not its beauty but the consecration of it. We gain life by giving it.

Christ the Hero.

As Jesus stood, unrecognized, on that dizzy eminence of the pinnacle, it seemed once more that He had failed. And there appeared to surge through His mind the accumulated discouragement of those thirty years—the neglect of Bethlehem—the oblivion of Egypt—the contempt of Jerusalem—and the obscurity of Nazareth. The Devil, mocking as he sought to seduce, repeated his "if"—if Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down. Our Lord encountered every kind of danger. At birth, He was nearly murdered. He braved the wild beasts. He was a mountaineer. Twice was He threatened with drowning. In the Temple, the rioters tried to stone Him. At Nazareth, they would have thrown Him from a cliff. He did not fear the infection of fever, but visited Peter's mother-in-law and healed her. Ever ready to touch the leper, He risked even that most terrible of all Eastern contagions. When He knew that Judas would betray Him, He did not leave Jerusalem, but continued talking with His disciples, and joined with them in singing their evening hymn.

But He would not trifle with His life. He only touched the leper in order to heal, and only walked on the water in order to rescue. As He did not defy the Law of Moses, so He did not defy the law of gravity, which so wonderfully unites the material world by unseen yet universal attractions. But He made it clear that if as Son of Man He was subject to these laws, as Son of God He was Master of them. As man, He quoted Moses, who said, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth"; but as God, He added the Sermon on the Mount. As man, He did not fling Himself from the pinnacle of the Temple; but as God, He did tread the Sea of Galilee.

"Cast thyself down" sums up all the arts of sensationalism, whereby we advertise our religion, our politics, our arts, our social position. The preacher who depends on language, on epigram, on voice and gesture—who attracts admiration to himself and thinks of how it will strike the public—that man, that woman, is very near the peril of the pinnacle. This temptation was the ruin of Savonarola. The ordeal by fire, which is to prove God, is an impious perversion of the martyrdom by fire, which proves man.

Christ and Bravado.

Imagine, if you can, what would have been the disaster to faith, if our Lord had flung Himself down among the people. Good men and women, anxious to follow Him, would have committed every extravagance, and the whole impulse of the Church would have been directed to the unusual in life, leaving untouched the average and regular claims of every day. On these terms, the few only could have become disciples. If the many had so believed and so acted, so-

ciety would have been disorganized. Our Lord worked many miracles, and had a reason for so doing, which we will examine in due course; but His wonders were never inspired by bravado. He did *not* cast Himself down from the pinnacle. He did *not* allow Himself to be cast down over the precipice of Nazareth. He did not gratify Herod's desire for a state performance of the healing power, either during His ministry, or at His trial. When He cleansed the leper, He told him strictly to say nothing about it, except to the priest. When He raised the daughter of Jairus, He expelled all witnesses save the parents and three others. When He cured a deaf and dumb man, He took him aside, and so dealt with his malady. To us, a miracle arouses faith. To Him, a miracle rewarded faith. He could do no mighty work in His own country because of their unbelief after seeing Him at His bench; and the generation that sought after a sign was wicked and adulterous, since, in professing to worship God, it demanded a gratification of the eye.

The miracles that He achieved—amazing though they were—were less of miracles than those which, having that power, He refused to perform. It was true, as Satan said, that He could command the angels —twelve legions of them—who would have kept Him in all His ways, including Gethsemane. Neither on the pinnacle nor in the garden did He summon them. He won all His victories without the big battalions. He could have come down from the Cross and left the thieves impotently hanging there. But He refused the very narcotic that would have eased His sufferings, and in consciousness and sanity drained the dregs of what He had to undergo. His greatest miracle was not Power, but Love; and that Love was God.

XIX

HE LEAVES THE WILDERNESS

"One Unalterable Magna Charta"—The Wiles of the Devil—Christ and the Scriptures—Worship First.

THOSE who read these little studies will bear with me if I take a further glimpse, and a final one, at our Lord and His tempter. He had many private interviews, as with Nicodemus by night; but here in the desert He was quite alone—there was no witness of what happened except the Devil. And what makes the narrative so compelling of attention is that it was thus strictly autobiographical—a personal disclosure by Christ Himself. He who was afterwards the Friend of publicans and sinners here asserted that, behind the scenes, His constant and unwelcome associate had been the Evil One.

Many and terrible as were the blasphemies pronounced against His character, no one ever suggested that Jesus was, during those six weeks, other than sinless. And this is the more notable because He had to face constant calumnies, of which the most iniquitous was a charge of what we should call witchcraft. When He rebuked people, they said He had a devil; and when He healed them, it was by the prince of the devils that He cast out devils. Yet these wicked allegations

did not once include a reference to the wilderness. The Slanderer who inspired the abuse was silent about that experience. The tongue of the whisperer, who spares the private life of no public man, was here tied and dumb. To the accounts of the matter in the Gospels there is no alternative record. Those documents stand unchallenged, and it would be irreverence even to suggest the measureless contrast between our Lord's inner experiences and those, let us say, of Mohammed or Buddha.

"One Unalterable Magna Charta."

Influence is reciprocal, and in resisting temptation Jesus gave even the very Tempter a chance. The Master did not content Himself with saying that *man* shall live by every word proceeding from the mouth of God. As, later, He preached to the spirits in prison, so here He came to closer quarters with His adversary, offering him personally the very word which sustained the Chosen People when they crossed that same bleak and torrid region. *Thou,* He declared, shalt not tempt the Lord *thy* God. *Thou* shalt worship the Lord *thy* God and Him only shalt *thou* serve. The message of God to man was thus seen to be, not a local by-law for a planet, wandering, a speck of dust, through boundless space. It is the one unalterable Magna Charta, for all that lives in every region—be it in time or be it in eternity, be it in spirit or be it in body. The claim is absolute, here and hereafter, on the proudest and most rebellious, as on the humblest and the weakest. Satan set out to seduce the Son of Man into worshiping him. He found that he was tempting his God, to whom all service and worship were due.

As one reads these accounts, one realizes what is

sometimes forgotten, namely, that our Lord and the Devil did not here meet for the first time. Not long afterwards, He Himself told the people that Satan was the father of lies and a murderer *from the beginning*—that beginning when the Word, since made flesh, dwelt with God. He could detect at a glance the lineaments of that evil spirit, incarnate, as it were, in the faces of men. It was the Devil who picked up the good seed and sowed tares amid the wheat. It was the Devil who established his fatherhood over the stubborn and argumentative Jews—turning their grip of truth into the clutch of self and sin. It was the Devil who, contaminating kindliness itself, prompted Peter to dissuade the Saviour from His purpose to meet death at Jerusalem, and would have sifted that Apostle like grain. Nor did Jesus for one instant doubt that the Devil lived in an outer darkness where was weeping, as of sorrow, and gnashing of teeth, as of anger and pain. The Everlasting Son of God did not doubt, because He knew it as a fact. He had watched the Devil *from the beginning*. And it was because He thus knew the Devil that He afterwards fathomed the tragedy of the Iscariot's heart.

The Wiles of the Devil.

In modern war, the combatants are concealed and their plans held secret. But goodness is armed *cap-à-pie*, and rides panoplied into the field, with helmet and breastplate and sword flashing recklessly in the Sun of Righteousness. When the temptations were failing of their objective, the Devil, with insidious tact, summoned Scripture to his aid, quoting a psalm, every verse of which applied to our Lord's special trouble in the wilderness. We seem to hear our

Saviour repeating to Himself those matchless verses which He had learnt in the synagogue, about the secret place of the Most High, the shadow of the Almighty, the lion and the adder, the young lion and the dragon, to be trampled underfoot. Here were the armorial bearings of Satan, known the world over—the serpent that poisons life and the lion that devours it, opposed in deadly conflict to the Redeemer who saves life. It was from this, of all other psalms, that, with remorseless ingenuity, the Devil drew his deadliest "arrow" to aim at the nobler "Lion of Judah."

This subtle foe does not merely pander to the worst in man; he accommodates himself to the best; "quoting Scripture for his purpose"; falsifying statistics; changing affections into vices, hopes into ambitions, faith into credulity, worship into superstition, art into seduction, law into cruelty, liberty into license, churches into vested interests; and, as here, a sense of God's care, of the angels bearing us up lest we dash our foot against a stone, into the habit of taking things for granted, as if we may be sure of safety however willfully we choose our path. In the New Testament, we frequently come across paraphrases and summaries of what is said in the Old Testament. The Jewish Bible was handled, not slavishly, but with a splendid and audacious familiarity. But, in the Devil's mouth, the accuracy was that of a forger. The omission was the more deliberate, because the words quoted were exact.

Christ and the Scriptures.

To Jesus, at that supreme moment, a merely general acquaintance with the Bible would have been useless. He had need to know its every parenthesis as a lawyer

scrutinizes each word in a complicated title-deed. Few of us, hearing that ninety-first Psalm chanted, would have attached supreme importance to the little phrase about being kept *in all our ways;* yet we have therein a summing up of the entire revelation of God to the Jews. They were a *chosen* people. They had an appointed history. They were not mere flotsam and jetsam on the sands of time. In all their ways they were to acknowledge Him, and He would direct their paths. Iniquity is just this—a turning to our own way. And the whole point of the charge unto the angels to bear us up lest we be injured, is that the way is stony, uneven, and not at all what we would ourselves choose. He does not remove the stones. But, on the other hand, He would not have us "dashed" against them. We may appear to make no progress—but that matters little. What He would save us from is the fate of the disappointed man. Whatever may happen to our feet, He would not have our souls bruised.

In all of which, we find the answer to fatalism. Our path lies before us—that is plain; but we are not the sport of a blind destiny. We *can,* if we so determine, tempt—we *can* take liberties with—the Lord our God. Providence, like science, excludes chance, or luck; yet there was a truth in the idea of the pagan that the gods ought not to be offended. To steam full speed through icebergs is irreligious. To start the day without one thought of our Maker is to invite catastrophe. And we are sometimes less punctilious with the Almighty than we are with our employers, or our solicitors, or our sovereign. We *tempt* Providence and challenge consequences.

From the Temple, with its man-made pinnacle,

our Lord proceeded to the mountain where—no longer an ecclesiastical Christ but the Christ that is universal—He surveyed the world. What Satan showed Him was the kingdoms and their glory; what He saw was the sin and suffering to which Satan was indifferent. More than once we read how He looked on the multitudes and was moved with compassion, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd. It was the world that God loved so intensely as to send into it His only begotten Son; and to corrupt our Lord's ambition to save the perishing was the last endeavor of the Devil. In casting oneself down there was danger. But to fall down and worship, what could be simpler? A little bribery on polling-day, a touch of insincerity in a peroration, a hint of sharp practice in business, a compromise of principles, a word of flattery to the influential, some innocent wire-pulling—we all know these genuflections to the Evil One, who boldly claims that kingdoms are given to him, and are thus his to give away. We who compose society, by our selfishness and subservience constantly surrender our institutions, until they belong neither to us nor to God. It is not only on the coast-line of Africa that the spirit of evil is worshiped.

Worship First.

Surely, it might be argued, if the end were salvation, the means would be forgiven. Think what an Emperor we would have had in the Lord Jesus—what abuses He would have swept away, what tyrannies He would have broken down, what oppression He would have relieved! He was asked to choose right service by the aid of wrong worship; and, without an instant

of hesitation, He set worship first. It is not what a man does that matters, but why he does it, and how he does it; the means are more than the end; nor is there any service of men which is not, first, a service of God. The little maid who bore her witness was nobler far than Naaman, the Prime Minister, who was healed, only to bow himself once more in the house of Rimmon. And the sinful woman breaking her alabaster box upon the feet of the Christ was nearer the truth of things than Judas, who wanted those two hundred pennies for the poor. Joseph was sold for twenty pieces of money. Achan turned traitor for a wedge of gold and a Babylonish garment. Elisha's servant hankered after a few talents, and Judas sold his Master for thirty shekels. But Christ, in the temptation in the wilderness, would not exchange the whole world for His own soul. And for that soul it was the world that Satan offered.

XX

THE SAVIOUR AND THE MULTITUDE

Sought by all Classes—Popularity and Success—"Many" and "Few."

A JOURNALIST, writing in the style of the newspapers of to-day, would have said that our Lord's mission among men was an immediate success. Within a few weeks He became unchallengeably the most prominent Personage in the land. Wherever He went, a multitude followed, drawn from Galilee, with its industries; from the wilder and remoter Decapolis; from royal Judea and ancient Jerusalem; from the regions beyond Jordan; and even from Tyre and Sidon. When He entered Nain, the crowd was there. At Jericho they thronged upon Him. If He crossed the lake, the people took boats after Him, or ran together from all cities on foot to meet Him. At the base of the mountain where He was transfigured, thousands waited for Him. "All men seek for Thee," said Simon Peter, as He proceeded to the "next towns."

In weighing apparent discrepancies in the narratives, we should bear in mind the hurry—the excitement—the Oriental eagerness, of which He was the center. To describe one of His days would be like

analyzing the movements of an avalanche. Even the inspired pens of the Evangelists left that task unachieved and unattempted. They laid their sick in the market-places where He healed them. They sought even to touch the hem of His garment, and were thus made whole. They gave Him no leisure, not so much as to eat, invading the very house where He was taking His meals, so that there was no room, not even by the door; and, in those breathless days, He was often an hungered, as when He sought fruit from the barren fig-tree, beneath the walls of Jerusalem. We read how He sat, weary, by the well of Samaria, while His friends brought Him food; how, on one of their little voyages in an open boat, their supplies were inadvertently reduced to one loaf; how, on the Sabbath, His disciples picked corn, as they walked along, rubbing the grain in their hands, and so fed themselves. It seemed as if, in that strenuous career, there was not one moment to be wasted; and in telling the story, St. Mark's favorite word is "immediately." Where John the Baptist stayed by the Jordan and spoke to those who came to him, Jesus walked abroad, searching the highways and the hedges for those He came to save.

Sought by all Classes.

Important persons sought our Saviour's acquaintance. There was the king's officer at Capernaum, whose son was healed. There was the centurion, who pleaded for the life of his servant. There was Nicodemus, a (so to say) Member of Congress, who came to Him secretly by night. There was Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, broken-hearted over his daughter's death. Wealthy tax-gatherers, like Matthew and

Zacchæus, prepared great banquets for Him. Fashionable ladies, like Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, ministered unto Him of their substance. At Bethany, His home was with Lazarus, and the sisters Martha and Mary, whom He loved dearly; while at the house of Simon the Leper, hard by—another friend in comfortable circumstances—He was entertained to a dinner, at which Mary of Bethany broke her alabaster box of ointment, very precious, over His feet. In the Sanhedrin itself—a legislature which combined the functions of Convocation and Commons—His credentials were discussed, while Antipas, the tetrarch, frequently asked about Him, and offered an audience. With the children, He was —forgive the familiar term—an especial favorite. Mothers brought them to receive His blessing. They were constantly present while He taught, and never found His words dull. Following Him on the mountains, they walked miles, or were carried, until He had to find food for them, lest they and their mothers should faint on the way. When He entered Jerusalem on His last visit, they were His chief retinue and bodyguard—His Boy Scouts and Camp Fire Girls. What hurt Him most when He thought of that city's doom was the anguish of the mothers as they clasped their babes to their breasts amid the tumult of war.

Some of us are habitually behind the times. We yearn for the lost happiness of the Middle Ages, or the noble yet vanished institutions of Greece and Rome. Others of us are in advance of the times. Before we can do good, we must have Socialism and Disarmament, and some other remote system. Christ did not despise either History, which deals with the past, or Prophecy, which reveals the future. On the

road to Emmaus, He so talked about the traditions of His race as to fire the hearts of the two disciples with a noble enthusiasm. And He alone foresaw the fearful destiny of Jerusalem. But He had the courage to handle the Present. *The* time, He said, is now fulfilled. Look, He would exclaim, the fields are already white unto the harvest. *Every* moment was for Him "the psychological moment." Every utterance was an eternal utterance. The people were amazed by His miracles. But they were not less astonished by His words, which were as wonderful as His works. It was a conversation that captured Nathanael, and another that won the Samaritans. He spoke with an authority of His own, not derived from others, and He also spoke with grace, or, as we should say, with tact, courtesy, sympathy. His was a voice so gentle that it soothed the sick, yet so resonant that it sounded forth above the storms at sea—above the roar of gossip in the Temple, above the tumults around the Cross. The multitudes on the mountain could hear His every syllable, and He could speak with ease from a boat to the crowds that lined the beach. The very tomb did not exclude those commanding tones, for Lazarus, in his grave-clothes, was awakened and came forth.

The reason why the common people heard Him so gladly was that He always respected His audience. Because they were ignorant and diseased and sinful, He gave them the best. When publicans and sinners came to hear Him, the sight of the Pharisees, those hard and unloving critics, moved Him to utter the three unforgettable illustrations of the infinite sacredness of human life—the one lost sheep in a hundred; the one lost coin in ten; the one lost son out of only

two. Nor were the people irresponsive. When the scribes and Pharisees plotted with the Herodians against the Saviour, they were constantly restrained by public opinion. When they would have seized Him, they feared the multitude. And His arrest, when at last it was achieved, was the result of a betrayal, masked by the darkness of the night.

Popularity and Success.

Jesus was not indifferent to popularity. On the contrary, He analyzed and judged it. When His seventy evangelists returned, and in exultant language told Him of their triumphs over evil, His eye flashed with the vision of His enemy, Satan, falling into impotence. It was as if His joy in His own work is less than His satisfaction of soul when "greater things" are achieved by those whom He died to save. When the Greeks came to Him, it seemed as if, for the second time, He saw the kingdoms of the world laid at His feet, with the glory of them—a glory that He could now claim, because it came to Him rightly, through His Father, and not through the Devil, and would come again and yet again, as the centuries rolled on. One reason why He was beloved lay in the thoroughness of His methods. Like the good shepherd, He sought until He found. There were many countries richer and of greater political prestige than the Holy Land, but Jesus did not go abroad once, save as a babe to Egypt; and when near the frontier He encountered a Syro-Phœnician woman, He told her truly, yet almost ruthlessly, that He was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. We do not know how often He trod those narrow highways. Many towns, like Capernaum and Bethsaida, He visited over and

over again. He did not desire that people should be content with a mere glimpse of Him, but offered Himself to them wholly, frequently, patiently, as an ever-accessible Friend—a Neighbor; not an author to be read and put aside, but the Author and *Finisher* of our faith. He had no need to complain that His opportunities were restricted, for with Him every opportunity was, as it were, enough. His movement followed natural law; it spread as leaven spreads; it grew as a seed grows: first Jerusalem, then Samaria, then Galilee, and so on, to the uttermost ends of the earth. It was the strategy of that Master-brain whence were devised the concentric waves on the surface of a pool into which a stone has fallen from heaven.

Yet the outward success of His work was in many ways a hindrance to Him. The crowds were selfish in their very admiration. The four stretcher-bearers, who brought a paralytic to Him, as He sat in a house, were nearer His kingdom than the strong and healthy people in the congregation who refused to make way for their afflicted patient. On another occasion that same multitude did not respect His own mother's desire to speak to Him. Zacchæus was anxious not only to see Jesus as He passed, but to make Him welcome in his house, and introduce Him to his friends; yet Zacchæus also was thrust back from the pavement by the very folk who could have easily seen over his head. They who accompanied Him in procession through Jericho did their utmost to silence the cries of blind Bartimæus, until He commanded the man to be brought,—note the strength of that word *command*,—and it was only His authority thus expressed that changed their contempt for the beggar into sympathy. The people who seemed to be most

attentive to the Master were sometimes farthest from Him, and as we think of those scribes and Pharisees grumbling against the forgiveness of sins, we realize what He meant when He said that many would call Him "Lord, Lord" whom He never knew, save as workers of iniquity.

"Many" and "Few."

There were so many who saw Him and knew about Him; there were so few who followed Him—so many called, so few chosen. That was why He spoke so earnestly of the broad road, where everyone walks, and the strait gate, which is so seldom discovered. Ten lepers were healed, as to-day tens of millions are blessed by the material benefits of the true faith; one only returned to the Redeemer Himself, as a grateful worshiper. Yet He did not desire a testimonial, for when first He cleansed a leper He did it, as it were, confidentially, and thought only of the man visiting the priest and regaining his place in society. It was not "the cause" that absorbed His affection. He was ever seeking the individual—taking a dumb man, as at Jericho, away by himself, or a blind man, as at Jerusalem; and, gradually, by symbols of His own devising, evoking love and faith from the isolated heart, until ear heard, eye saw, tongue spoke. Of His words, all of them divine, few have been reported and published. His aim was rather, and still is, to speak to people quietly, so that no one else can hear—to make Himself, not so much a public man, as a particular and intimate Friend, "who sticketh closer than a brother," "nearer than hands and feet."

But, as all seemed to be going so well, there came a check and a crisis in His career. When the people

desired to make Him a king, He withdrew Himself, not refusing the honor, for it belonged to Him by right, but suggesting an immeasurable distance between their ideas and His. To them kingship was based upon "Panem and Circenses"—the bread which satisfies the body, the miracle which fascinates the eye. Jesus truly fed them, He truly healed them; but by leaving them for awhile He tested their allegiance, and found it wanting. What they offered was a throne outside of themselves. What He demanded was the throne within. Where Moses led twelve tribes to the Promised Land, He chose for the Kingdom twelve apostles, of whom three were especially intimate. To teach great crowds was not enough. He must, as it were, get inside the human heart, and expel the evil by His presence there. He must be the very Bread and Wine which sustain His people's souls. He must give His flesh for their hearts' food. He must come to them and sup with them, and they with Him, until they and He are one, as He is one with His Father. So He spoke, and the message destroyed His "popularity." When He was seized in the garden, the multitude, who had been taught and healed, came with swords and staves. And His few remaining friends all forsook Him and fled.

XXI

THE JUDGE ON HIS THRONE

The Mountains of Scripture—The Legislation of Christ.

WHAT we call the Sermon on the Mount is misunderstood because it is misnamed. It was not a sermon, preached from a pulpit to religious people; but an edict or ukase, promulgated for all His subjects, by a Sovereign seated on a throne of His own choosing—not designed by men, but one of the eternal hills. He did not consult the Emperor, or the Church, or the Sanhedrin, or the Parliament, or the Electors, but spoke with sole and personal authority—"*I say unto you.*" And His law was delivered in terms as clear and as challenging as the commands of Moses or the *Code Napoléon.*

Moses legislated as a minister of state, who transmits the will of a Greater than himself. It was from Another that he received the tables of stone. But Jesus, in His own royal Person, wrote His law upon the living tablets of men's hearts, with a hand as yet unpierced by the rebels who afterwards rejected Him. As He was in all points tempted as we are, so, unlike the lawyers of Jerusalem, He laid no burden of obligation on others which He had not Himself first lifted. He commanded only where He had—in that

amazing phrase—"learned obedience." And when He told us to be perfect, as our Father is perfect, He set the very standard to which He had attained as the Beloved Son, in whom God was "well pleased." He was thus the last and greatest of the Judges, summing up for all time the long Jewish tradition of righteousness.

Matthew tells us that our Lord, seeing the multitudes, ascended a mountain and taught. Luke adds that He selected one of those level places which are to be found in every such upland. On that level place, as by the seashore, men and women, old and young, courtiers, merchants and artisans, all stood side by side, with no privilege save His presence. In His synagogue there are no chief seats. In His banqueting house of love there are many mansions, but no uppermost rooms. He condemned the assumption of titles. "One is your Master," He said, "and all ye are brethren." He founded no caste. He wore and He authorized no special costume; and vestments, as displayed to-day, though we regard them as ecclesiastical and sacred, are often the survival of the common clothes which were good enough for the earliest Christians.

The Mountains of Scripture.

Yet the level place was not in a valley, bounded by Nature, or a street, confined by art, and home, and commerce, and pleasures, and politics, and temples. It was on a mountain, and the mountains of the Bible are not without meaning. It was on a mountain that Abraham was ready to sacrifice his only son. It was on a mountain that Moses received the law from God; and Elijah, the fire. It was on

a mountain that our Lord was tempted, that He taught, and prayed, and was transfigured, and suffered; from a mountain, He ascended to heaven. All the supreme events of His life were thus lofty and universal. As He spoke, He could look north, south, east, and west, and no obstacle interrupted His view. However profoundly climates may modify the character of races in every zone, His law, His glory, His redeeming sacrifice are the same. The air of the mountain was untainted either by the breath of man or by the fumes of industry. If a cloud came there, it was not smoke or fog, but the glowing garment of the love of God. On that mountain there was no roar of traffic; and if in the stillness the people did not hear, it was because they were deaf. His teaching applied to every circumstance, and transcended all environment. His word was a direct message to every nation, at every period.

When Moses received the Law, he climbed the mountain alone, and there were thunderings and lightnings. Jesus encouraged the people to follow Him, as if He knew that they could best keep the Law when in His company. That reads as if it were simple; yet it was not so, for many of the people were too lame to climb with Him, too deaf to hear His voice, too blind to see His face. His teaching was not enough without His miracles. God is not only Truth, but Power; so that, throughout our Lord's career, we have the word and the work in close alliance, each inseparable from the other. I say this with emphasis, because there is often a complete misapprehension of the scope of this "sermon." People think that it contains the Gospel of salvation, and is, therefore, the essence of Christianity. I ven-

ture to assert that the Sermon on the Mount did not save one person who heard it! We read therein not what we can be, but what we should be, and the question how we are to be what we ought to be is left deliberately unanswered. It was just because Christ's law was unattainable that His Redemption had to be freely accessible to everyone.

The Legislation of Christ.

The judgment-seat of Moses determined in the main our acts. Men were to be good to their parents, to keep the Sabbath, to refrain from murder and theft and other offenses, to give a tenth to the community, to attend Divine worship, and so on. Jesus legislated for a glance of the eye, a contemptuous thought, an angry word. Before His judgment-seat prayer was not enough, and fasting was not enough, and alms-giving was not enough. He asked *why* men prayed and fasted and gave alms. With Him the motive, being of the heart, was everything. If we seek reward from men, we lose reward from God. Whatever good thing we do should be secret and confidential. We should conceal it, not from others merely, but from ourselves. The left hand must not know what the right hand doeth. Omniscience alone must detect the good things we do. It was His own rule. We know that Jesus arranged with Judas for gifts to be made to the poor. On no single occasion was His benevolence seen of men. We know that, in the wilderness, He fasted. But there was not one witness. We know that He devoted much time to prayer. And here again it was His custom to be alone, and for a disciple to be admitted to that intimacy was a rare and valued privilege. The blatancy of bazaars,

the parade of patriotic economy and spectacular intercession—all this would have disappointed Him. He wanted goodness to be a gift for God alone.

The old law was enforced by terrible punishments, like stoning or stripes, inflicted by man on man, which deterrents still enshadow our criminal system. Sinai was a mountain of thunder and lightning. Where Jesus spoke, whether on the upland or on the lake, there was no storm, but the peace of which He is the Prince. He would win us to goodness by persuasion. He does not need to institute a trial or call evidence, to guide Him in His verdict. His omniscience is instant. "Go, call thy husband," said He to the woman of Samaria, and she pleaded guilty. "Go, sell all thou hast and give to the poor," was His answer to the rich man, whose self-righteousness withered into sorrow. Nor does He require a policeman, or prosecutor, or warder, with whose help to punish disobedience. On the contrary, He mistrusted the sentences pronounced by the State. He saw that good men are often wrongly accused and despitefully treated, while yet remaining happy, and indeed joyful, since to rejoice and be glad is happiness revealed. His sentence is thus independent of public opinion. It is blessing on the one hand, woe on the other—a reward and a punishment, not of the body, but of the soul.

The only evidence that He admitted was of *character*. He did not ask a man's age, or nationality, or where he had been educated, or what income he receives, or what is his social status, or trade, or profession. The questions on His registration forms were these: Is this person meek? and poor in spirit? a mourner? a peace-maker? These are the people whom He declared to be "blessed." The Beatitudes that so

deal with *character* are seven; one only, and this the last, is sufficient for *circumstances*.

About our Lord's judgments there is thus a large and inevitable range from which not one of us can escape. To penal servitude or imprisonment with hard labor there is set a term of years, limited by the span of this mortal life. But the happiness or misery of our souls is not bounded by time, being eternal as the soul itself; nor is there any tribunal, whether of Church or State, that can grant reprieve or deny the benediction.

XXII

WHAT HIS TRUTH COSTS

Teacher and Pupils—Keeping Pace with the Redeemer.

IMPORTANT as are the perplexities of scholars, what concerns us most is the indifference, the discouragement of common folk, who once heard the Saviour so gladly. His teaching sometimes seems so impracticable, and we ask why His miracles have ceased. And so, to our great loss, we leave Him alone, and do not come to Him that we might have life; while we are too hurried, too careless, to remember that what happens to us is only what happened to people like ourselves, in Judea and Galilee. The "modern" problem, as it is called, is really as ancient—as eternal—as the Gospel itself. Sometimes our Lord asked whether His very Apostles would not leave Him. "Will ye also go away?" was His testing inquiry of the Twelve; and Peter's answer rings out as pertinent as if it were printed in yesterday's newspaper. "To whom shall we go?" Suppose that we assume our Lord's message to be a failure. Who else is there whose words mean life? There is no other.

He did not say that His teaching would be easy. He knew that the best of us would not grasp His

meaning all at once, still less obey it. For this reason He wants us to listen, even when we do not understand. And He spoke in parables, because these stories cling to the mind, and so renew their offer of an inner truth not at first appreciated. In the whole range of literature there are no passages so familiar as these parables. Yet we are still discovering the fullness of their meaning. And, after all, what are our commentaries and text-books compared with these original treasures? The parables are creative, the criticism is parasitic.

Teacher and Pupils.

We think that we can master the wisdom of Christ in an hour or two. He found that after training His disciples daily for years there were many things still to be said which they could not bear to hear. Philip was one of His closest friends, but even Philip did not understand in what sense Jesus reveals to us our Father in heaven. John the Baptist himself had his misgivings, while the scribes and Pharisees constantly stumbled at His doctrine. We see the men who were to organize the Christian Church quarreling among themselves who should be the greatest; ready to call down fire on some incredulous Samaritan village; forbidding the good work of others who cast out devils in Christ's name without following the apostolical succession; demanding high office in the new kingdom; driving away the children from His very knees.

We see these men in terror at a storm, helpless before a demoniac boy, asleep during His agony, in hiding during His crucifixion. He had to teach these men to be as humble as a child; to share His spirit, which seeks only to save; to recognize His power

where good is done; to measure honor by sacrifice, to respect the sacredness of the young; to be brave in danger, strong in the fight against evil; watchful of temptation; to be witnesses, not fugitives, when He was attacked. And if as a Teacher He was thus patient, is it much to ask of us that we be equally patient as His pupils?

In ignoring or criticizing or resisting Christ's instruction, we assume that we are judicial persons, sitting as jurors, who are detached from the issues involved, whereas in reality we are the parties to the case. In every inquiry that we make, in every manuscript that we dissect, in every doubt that we raise, we are litigants, claiming exemption for our money and our lives. The only real question is whether we will or will not have this Man to rule over us. He is not satisfied with the righteousness—let alone the scholarship—of the library and the university; far from it. For His claims could not well be more exacting. The eager man, who is ready to follow wherever he is led, must understand clearly that the foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests—there is comfort and there is safety for the worldly wise—but the Son of Man, a Captain who ever bivouacs with His soldiers, hath not where to lay His head.

Keeping Pace with the Redeemer.

The stickler for etiquette, who wishes first to bury his father, must recognize, on his side, that funerals are not to impede the great advance: "Let the dead bury their dead." His duty is to follow the Master. The courteous man, who spends all his time answering letters and fulfilling the amenities of polite society—who is well known at the Club and fond of compli-

mentary banquets—must cease from his salutations by the way. The family man, with wife and children to support, must be ready to sacrifice for the Cross all that brave men sacrifice for their country. Having once enlisted, he must not look back. His hand is on the plow. And, finally, the man of property, who from his youth upwards has kept the Commandments, must sell all he has and give it to the poor, if he is to keep pace with the Redeemer. Simple for such a man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven! Indeed, no. A camel, unloaded of its burdens, might as easily pass through the eye of a needle.

Even His most loyal friends were staggered by this demand on their very beings. "Who," they asked, "can be saved?" And, in replying, He did not compromise. He agreed that, with men, such consecration of "all we have and are" is impossible. But He added that with God nothing is impossible. Many men and women have, in fact, given up what He asked, and have thus discovered what He meant when He promised happiness to those who, instead of finding offense in His words, obeyed them.

On the application of these "hard sayings," I may write something a little later. For the moment I confine myself strictly to the one point, that their difficulty, as it confronts us, is nothing new or unforeseen. And despite their difficulty, the sayings still challenge us, and cannot be disposed of. With heaven and earth still here, not one syllable of His has, in fact, passed away. Before we decide that His teaching is untrue, we would do well to make sure that we hear Him correctly. He Himself was profoundly distrustful of our oral faculty. Some of us, like stony ground, seemed to Him hard and shallow, ready

enough to say "Yes" to the Gospel when our surroundings are favorable to it; but withering away when the same surroundings, like the sun, exhaust us with the heat which was once our stimulus. Others are like a field of thorns, choked by the world that is too much with us, and only a few offer good ground for the eternal seed. Even on that good ground there is the Devil, who removes the seed, or sows tares, not in broad daylight—you do not read of it in theological treatises, or find mention of him in discussions about empty churches—but at night; so that what our Lord once said has to compete with the weeds of civilization, an often frivolous Press, an often regrettable drama, the race course, the deluge of fiction, the plague of portraiture. People have tried in vain to uproot the tares. Roman Catholics and Protestants have, each in turn, applied their expurgatorial censorship. But our Lord has advised us to allow the good and the bad to grow up together—you cannot destroy the one without imperiling the other—and each must fight the other. Not until the end of our age shall error be sifted completely from truth, and truth be so purified.

Although nothing of His is lost, He does not hold us responsible for understanding everything that He said. For instance, there is in the East a pathetic class of men, almost unknown among us, not one of whom, so far as we are told, ever came to Him, but who, none the less, received a special message. A saviour less courageous than our Lord would have left these men to take their chance with the rest, and perhaps be driven from salvation; but He made it clear, with unflinching candor, that He understood their case in all its bearings, and did not blame them

or despise them for their misfortune. As in His teaching on marriage, so here, He said, let those receive it who can receive it. It may be that we do not need that particular word. But the word meant life or death to the first convert from Ethiopia.

Finally, we should remember that He did not leave behind Him a book of proverbs, over which we are to wrangle as best we may, but the Spirit of Truth—not of Conjecture, or Criticism, or Hypothesis—who is our Comforter. The Spirit understands us, our circumstances, and these words of our Lord, which were spoken in that Spirit, and so can reconcile all three. What we call our private judgment should be the acceptance of that inward illumination. It is personal to each of us, yet not discordant, for we regard the same objects with the same vision, only from diverse standpoints. The Spirit's guidance is not the infallibility of the Pope, who does not really know about us, yet legislates as if he were omniscient. But it is certain as the stars, since His Word is His Bond, His Covenant. That illumination accompanies men and women who desire it wherever they go, resolving their doubts, guiding their opinions, dispelling their errors. No inquiry is resisted, for the aim is "*all* truth." But the greater the truth, the larger must be the obedience, for it is they who do the works who shall know of the doctrine. It is not Truth as a mere satisfaction to curiosity that He gives us, but truth as the basis of conduct, the food of the soul, the sustenance of love and faith and joy, the life breath of our happiness and peace. And His Truth embraces, not only the material and temporal things that we see with our eyes, wonderful though they be, but the spiritual and eternal, from which there is no escape.

XXIII

OUR LORD AND HIS BIBLE

An Unerring Mirror—Old and New—One and Indivisible—The Test of Truth.

SOME of us who wish, as we say, to come back to Christ, shut up the Old Testament, so exquisitely rendered into our mother tongue, because we do not see how its records of war and crime and lust fit in with the noble teachings of our Saviour. I think there must be some mistake here, for the Jewish Bible was, so far as we know, the only literature to which the Lord Jesus had access. It was His custom to attend the synagogue on the Sabbath day and to hear it read; and on one occasion, when they delivered to Him the Book of Isaiah, He did not lay it aside as if it were out of date, nor question the authorship, as if this determined inspiration, but opened the Book, as did Wycliffe, and found the place, as one who knew it well. Humbly accepting our limitations of memory, He read a passage, and only closed the parchment when, with the Word in men's minds, it had served its purpose. And He handed back the roll to the minister, to be preserved as a record of supreme value for generations to come.

He who as Man had stood before them to read, then

sat, as Lord and Master, to teach. Their eyes were fastened no longer on the inscribed page but on Him; and what He said was that the written words, so far from being obsolete, were that day actually fulfilled. The Spirit of Isaiah—this was the Spirit that was upon Him. He also would preach to the poor. He also would heal the broken-hearted. He also would deliver the captives. He also would enlighten the blind. He also would liberate the bruised. It was the graciousness of His Old Testament message that astonished them all.

An Unerring Mirror.

And it was the breadth of the Old Testament, not its narrowness, that afterwards angered their minds and endangered His life. He said nothing original when He told them that the widow who was blessed by Elisha was, like Naaman the leper, whom he healed, a heathen beyond the pale of Judaism. The stories were as familiar to those Nazarenes as the cliff from which they would have hurled the Man who recalled them. This "tribal volume," as some people regard it, brought home to Him, and through Him to His hearers, how there should be no salvation offered to them which was not available for all mankind, how God so loved, not one nation only, but *the world,* that He gave His only-begotten Son.

We condemn those narrow-minded people for not appreciating the Old Testament's universal message. But how many of us would listen patiently if some preacher were to tell us that enemies of our country have received comfort from God of which we, with our privileges, have proved unworthy? We have talked about our superior altruism, but is not our quarrel

with the Old Testament just this—that, like the men of Nazareth, we are humiliated at discovering ourselves in that unerring mirror. The War and the crime and the lust therein described find *us* out, and bring us under the general condemnation which envelops all mankind. We do not like to think that it is only the "poor," "the broken-hearted," "the captives," "the blind," and "the bruised" who are born once more in the acceptable year of the Lord. We are restless at the assertion that on our nation, as a nation, no blessing is granted which is not to be shared by us with all the nations under heaven.

Christ called Himself a Householder who brings forth treasures, new and old, not one without the other, but both. He spoke of the Scriptures as a garment which clothes the soul, and as a bottle which preserves the life. He did not alter or add to what had been written. The inserted patch would have torn the context. He did not pour the new wine of His Gospel into the ancient literary form; He developed his own vehicle of expression—a proverb—a prayer—a parable—a blessing—a lament—all gathered from the past, but all made new, like a fresh wineskin. And so it is to-day with our creeds, and churches, and constitutions. Under the stress of His abundant wisdom they are ever breaking down. There is dissent, and again dissent; and His new wine is spilled and wasted because human institutions and human systems cannot contain One who exceeds the Heaven of heavens.

Old and New.

Not that He abolished cloth and wine. He made these and all things new. The old song of Hannah

became the new song of Mary. The prophecies of a suffering Messiah became prophecies of a Messiah triumphant. The old miracles became new miracles. The old kingdom became a new kingdom; the old Jerusalem, a new Jerusalem. In the Sermon on the Mount there is not one thought which cannot be traced to the Old Testament. "Blessed" was Abraham's favorite word. Moses, like our Lord, pronounced woes. Aaron made it a rigid rule that every sacrifice must be salted with the salt of self-criticism. Joshua warned us that we must choose this day whom we would serve—God or Mammon—we cannot have both.

Take the Beatitudes. The Psalmists knew how near was God to the contrite spirit, that it is the man of a pure heart who sees the face of the King on His holy hill; that the meek—the men who obey as sons obey a father—inherit the earth, as their Father's estate, not by conquest, but by right, since to conquer oneself is to have conquered the universe. It was David who taught us that with the merciful, God shows Himself merciful. It was Solomon who held that the path of the just is as a shining light. It was Jeremiah who won the happiness which comes by persecution and despiteful usage. It was Isaiah who promised comfort to those who mourn. It was Amos who found a famine that was not of bread, a thirst which was not of water, a yearning for the words of the Lord. In the New, we read of the house built on the rock and the house built on the sand. And, in the Old, we are advised that, except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it.

One and Indivisible.

The Bible is one and indivisible. You cannot tear it apart. It stands or falls as a whole. And it is not by neglecting the Old Testament that we gain a better knowledge of our Saviour—quite the reverse. The men who looked forward to Him have many lessons to teach us who look backward, and it is He Himself who asked us to search their writings. He would have us take time over them and so discover Him. Those people, in His view, "greatly err" who remain ignorant of these Scriptures. He would not countenance the questions of the Samaritan woman, for He told her plainly that the Jews knew what they believed and would give Salvation to the world; and when He rose from the dead, He granted His special company to disciples who were still patiently discussing the Prophets. After he had ascended, the early Christians steadily pursued their study of the Hebrew Bible; their sacred Epistles were full of it, and the Revelation of John is a mosaic of which every jewel as it gleams is drawn from that inexhaustible treasury.

For He comes to us as a Greater than Solomon in his wisdom and a Greater than Jonah in his zeal. Reading His Old Testament, not for criticism but for food, He found there His own Divinity, for otherwise how did David call Him Lord, who was also his Son? And He found there eternal life, for otherwise how was God the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, if the patriarchs who are dead have ceased to be? And it was from those same writings that He quoted when He told us that God desires mercy and not sacrifice, lest we condemn the guiltless. A Book that He used

with such effect—words that rose to His lips so frequently and with such strengthening comfort—verses which so unfailingly solved His hardest problems—do we not realize that in His love and prevision of our needs He has handed them on to us, not as burdens, but as sustenance, as a staff to uplift as much as a rod to correct us?

The Test of Truth.

It was not the ideals of the Jews that were wrong—they and all of us have had excellent ideals. The difficulty is to carry them out. The ideals of Jesus summed up all others, but He did not forget, as we like to do, the actual depravity of mankind. He tested the book, not by prettiness, but by truth. We criticize the slaughter of the Amalekites. What was that incident compared with the present War, which Christ foretold? We are horrified by the material doom of Edom and Moab. How about the spiritual doom which He pronounced upon Capernaum and Bethsaida and Chorazin? The Babylonians captured Jerusalem. What was that calamity in comparison with the prophesied siege by Titus? There was a flood of water in the days of Noah. What was its terror by the side of the lakes of fire which man's wickedness has devised for man?

Knowing that these things would come to pass, Jesus did not flinch at the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah. He said it would be more tolerable for them in the day of judgment than for some of us. He did not question the repentance of Nineveh; He warned us that the Ninevites will rise up as our judges. He did not criticize the discipleship of the Sheban Queen; He asked us to consider her as our example. He did not

attack the ancient sacrifices of bulls and goats; He offered Himself at the hour of the evening sacrifice, a perfect Victim, to make for all our sins a complete and final atonement. And it seems as if, deliberately, He put His divine *imprimatur* on those ancient miracles,—the fiery serpents, the manna, the healing of Naaman, the experiences of Jonah—which criticism most furiously declares to be incredible. And indeed, not less remarkable is the fact that the Psalm in which David refers to his son as "Lord," and so indicates the Majesty of the Messiah, has been assailed by modern scholarship with especial violence, and roundly dated as "post-exilic." With all respect to learned men of to-day, I hold to the Incomparable Wisdom of Him Who, as "the Mighty God," seems to have foreseen these attacks.

XXIV

OUR LORD AND THE MIRACLES

His Works—His Word.

IF you tell me that you do not believe in the miracles of the Bible, I will not argue, for that would do harm to both of us; but I will state simply and briefly where I stand in this matter. Life is as incomprehensible now as it was to Job in his day; I have neither time nor strength to wander uncertainly amid its mazes; and, having found in our Lord a sure Guide to truths which I can test by experience, I am ready to trust Him in this where neither I nor anyone else can prove or disprove what is stated as fact. I could not so commit my judgment to the Church; still less to "the results of scholarship," which vary like the fashions. But I am satisfied that, if my future is safe with our Redeemer, so also must be my intellect. From which it follows that it is my duty, first, to discover what He thought and said about miracles; and secondly, to accept what He thought and said as final. Instead of reducing my religion to a wrangle, I thus find that its very difficulties draw me, again and again, to His wisdom. Men dispute His words and limit His claim; I rest assured that He is in the right.

For when I tell you, as I have done, how carefully

Jesus read His Old Testament, I am in effect reminding you that, from a boy upwards, He also had to face this problem of the supernatural. We say to ourselves that miracles happened many centuries ago; that there is no witness, still living, to bear testimony to them; and that the age of miracles is past and gone. We are only reviving the perplexities which faced Him when He in His day studied the signs and wonders of the Old Testament. We are expressly told that John the Baptist did no miracle, and that our Lord's first act of this kind was at Cana in Galilee, when He was thirty years of age. While He was a young man, there was not the slightest indication, except within Himself, that a new age of wonder was to dawn on a worn-out mankind. Yet in the world, thus devoid of "the supernatural," we cannot discover one hint that He ever doubted God's intervention in the affairs of our race. While He attacked the tradition of the elders, and announced the impending fall of the Temple, and overthrew the money-changers, He had no misgivings about the manna in the wilderness, the brazen serpent, and Jonah's great fish; and, on the Mount of Transfiguration, He met, not in controversy, but in communion, the two greatest workers of miracles in the past, Moses and Elijah—men whose deeds were as wonderful as their deaths. We know, therefore, that He reviewed this great matter in all its bearings, and His verdict is explicit. He worked miracles Himself. He gave that power to His disciples. When they returned to Him, exulting in what they had achieved, He did not reply, "But I must have evidence of this"; He accepted their word. And on hearing that men who did not follow His apostles were yet performing miracles in His Name, He did not say,

"Absurd! Impossible!" On the contrary, His comment was: "Forbid them not." For they who exercise this power in His Name will not speak lightly of Him —in their miracles, we see their reverence.

His Works.

Some of us think that we can ignore His miracles, provided that we accept and obey His teaching. If I were to try thus to cut the Gospels in half, I am sure that I should fail over it. To tear His words from His works is to rend Him in twain. Of our Saviour's Divinity, you cannot say: "Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther." Of His birth, there are two, but only two, explanations. Nor can we, on the one hand, dismiss Gabriel, and, on the other hand, retain the *Magnificat*. If peace on earth and good-will for men was not an angel-song, what was it? Did the shepherds improvise it? How beautiful, you say, that we should be told by the Blessed Virgin to do "whatsoever He saith unto us"! But when did she so advise us, if it were not at the marriage-feast where He transformed the water of obedience into the wine of happiness? We claim His word, "I will—be thou clean," as a valid gift to ourselves. Was it, then, uttered in vain to the leper, or are we really to assume that leper and priest were mere fiction? We are to be sure that He forgives us our sins, and we are to know it because He said so. Yet we are to abolish the occasion which, as it were, locates the utterance? The house with its broken roof, the crowds, the paralytic on his bed, the four friends who carried him, and the muttering scribes—are they to fade like a dissolving view, leaving us the voice, not of a Saviour, but of a phantom? Of what use is it that we meditate on His

words, "It is I, be not afraid," if the storm and His appearance on the water be merely an unsubstantial nightmare? Studying with dimmed eyes the line of small print that records your utter loss, how can you in this time of war look for comfort to Him who is the Resurrection and the Life, if He never wept for Lazarus, never commanded them to roll away the stone, never cried unto the dead, "Come forth"—or only recited the words as mockery amid the silent rebellion of the unyielding tomb? If He died for us, yet did not rise again, what becomes of His comments on Jonah; His promise to rebuild the Temple in three days; His pledge that He will receive us again unto Himself; His benediction on us who have not seen Him, yet believe; His desire that Peter should feed His lambs; His final and unchangeable command that those who worship Him shall go into all the world and preach His Gospel? There is no intellectual process, however ingenious or erudite, by which men may enjoy the fullness of our Lord's utterances, while denying the fullness of His omnipotence.

His Word.

I have been writing for those who love the Redeemer—better, it may be, and certainly more worthily, than I do myself—who yet seek an escape from the demands of faith by an impossible severance of His words from His works. But I am aware that there is a larger challenge which cannot be passed by. Some of us would like to think that the entire life of Christ—words and works together—is an exquisite product of the human imagination, playing around an attractive Personality, who did not do or say one-tenth part of what is now attributed to Him. I ask

the question: Whose imagination? I do not at the moment remember one great book or great poem written, or great picture painted, or great piece of music composed, by a committee! If our Lord be really a hero of fiction, who was the author of Him? You say that it is hard to think that He was born of God. Is it easier to believe that He was created in the brain of man? Homer and Shakespeare have at least a name by which they are known, and as we read their works we feel that they are greater than the children of their genius. Is it really credible that, in the hierarchy of literature, the man or men who, of their own intelligence, conceived the Redeemer of the world, and so transcended every other effort of the known immortals in art, remain anonymous, leaving behind them not one trace of their identity? I am told that Christ did not say, "I am the True Vine," and "I am the Bread of Life," and "I am the Good Shepherd." Then who did say it? Somehow or other these words came to the birth and cannot now be got rid of. What was their origin? We still await the answer of those who criticize. As someone has said, it must have taken a Christ to counterfeit the Christ.

I do not need to be told that miracles may be imagined or invented. About the Person of our Saviour Himself there have grown up many apocryphal legends, to which I may refer, merely as contrasts with the events recorded in the New Testament. We are told that, as a child, He transformed His playfellows into kids, because they declined to be His companions; how a boy who knocked Him down was cursed to death; and how a schoolmaster who corrected Him over His alphabet and struck Him,

was rewarded with a withered arm. "Henceforward," Joseph is supposed to have said, "let us keep Him within doors, for whosoever sets himself against Him perishes." There, in all their absurdity and irreverence, you have, in actual language, the utmost achievements of mere tradition! The Evangelists did not argue about them. They did not discuss them in long treatises for the learned. They declared as a fact that no such miracles occurred; and, except as curiosities, not one of these preposterous myths has survived oblivion. Many miracles have been manufactured by the superstitious. That is true. But none such have endured.

For I notice a subtle yet fundamental difference between our Lord's angle of vision—when He regarded the miraculous—and ours. We look up to these events, as to the precipitous sky-line of some distant and inaccessible mountain, which hardly seems to be real, so loftily does it tower above us. But He regarded these matters from above, and the contour of rock and ice which startles us was to Him merged in the general landscape, where perhaps it looms no clearer than the roof of some cottage where children are playing. The multitudes, and even His apostles themselves, were constantly lost in amazement over these signs and wonders and powers, but to Him they were only a part of His daily duty. What interests us so greatly about Moses is the crossing of the Red Sea; and about Elijah, the ascent to heaven in a chariot of fire. On the high hills, where He met Moses and Elijah, He mentioned neither, but conversed rather of His approaching death at Jerusalem, not by miracle, but by violence. It was the manna sent from heaven that impressed the Jews. What He remembered

was that this material manna did not sustain the body that dies. It was the brazen serpent as a symbol only that He mentioned; it was Jonah's three days, also as a symbol, that drew His comment. And when the Seventy returned in triumph over sickness and devilry and all the ills that flesh is heir to, He told them to rejoice rather because their names were written in the Book of Life. To Him, who values us all at our proper worth, you and I are of higher price than anything that we can hope to achieve. And where we regard the miracle as an almost incredible evidence of power, it was to Him but one among many revelations of the Divine Love.

XXV

THE RECOGNITION OF OUR LORD

God and Man—The Miracle at Cana—What Faith really is.

YOU must not ask me to tell you how it was that Jesus came to us as God and Man, for this is a mystery, which means an undisclosed truth that cannot be put into words, and the attempt to do so has often tortured the Church with dissension, and obscured His Presence among those who needed His help. So bitterly have people argued about His Divinity that their schisms and heresies and even their very orthodoxy outclamored the good news of His great love; and where the Arians, and the Nestorians, and the Eutychians, and the Monophysites could not find terms for His majesty, I must be content with the Gospels.

There I find that He does not expect us to *understand* what theologians call "His substance," but He would have us "RECEIVE HIM," and they who thus take Him have "the right to become the sons of God." So He describes Himself, not in hard terms, but simply as the Light by which we see, as the Shepherd who cares for us, as the Master who teaches, as the Friend whose love is even unto death, as the Way by which we walk, the Truth by which

we think—nay, as our Life itself, as branches have life in the vine. When He fed the multitudes, He showed His providence for their temporal needs; but when His own, His very own disciples, gathered around Him before He suffered, He remembered that they could not live by bread alone. "Take, eat," said He, as He handed them the loaf. "This is My Body, which is broken for you"; and, as He passed the cup, "This is My Blood, which was shed for you." Every part of Him—all that felt, and saw, and heard, and spoke, and suffered—was given to them—not easily, but with pain—by shedding, by breaking—and their communion was accepting the Gift. With Jesus Himself as Priest, there lay no special virtue in the bread as such, nor in the wine, but only in the remembrance of Him. Peter, who was one of them, denied Him thrice, and on that remembrance went out and wept bitterly. Judas betrayed Him, and, remembering, hanged himself. It was when He blessed and brake the bread that remembrance flashed on His friends at Emmaus.

God and Man.

Those who met Him in the flesh never doubted that He was Man. They brought Him food and begged Him to eat, and they put a pillow for Him that He might sleep in the boat. When He entered the city, they set Him on an ass; and, even as transfigured, Peter would have built for Him a shelter on the mountain. No one loved Him more reverently than Mary of Bethany, yet it was over His human feet that she poured her ointment. And after His resurrection Mary Magdalene mistook Him, not for a vision, but for the gardener. The disciples walking

to Emmaus assumed that He was a stranger on the road.

When we think about our Lord's Manhood, we do not challenge His Godhead. No one confessed that Godhead more clearly than Peter, who yet feared what He would suffer in the body at Jerusalem. And it was the print of the nails in His human hands, the wound of the spear in His human side, that drew from Thomas the words, "My Lord and my God." The soldiers who unclothed and reclothed Him, who scourged Him and smote Him and crowned Him and nailed Him to a cross of wood, little thought that they were proving Him no phantom or wraith of the imagination; as John, who lay on His very bosom, testified, when they pierced His side, and drew from His broken heart both blood and water, they proved that His nature was ours.

But He seemed to be wearing our nature, as it were, on a throne. When He was "a mere boy," the scribes were amazed by His answers; and, a few years later, asked how He knew His letters, having never learned. Andrew, His first disciple, was convinced that here was the Messiah. Philip, though knowing Him only as Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph, realized that He was the One of whom Moses and the Prophets spoke. Nathanael, with the pure heart, saw Him Divine as Son of God, and human as King of Israel. The woman of Samaria perceived that He was a Prophet; while her neighbors, having heard Him themselves, were assured that He was Christ, the Saviour, not of Israel only, but of the world. Single-handed—for the disciples gave Him no help—He twice drove the money-changers from the Temple. Unarmed—for they did

not defend Him—He faced the mob at Nazareth, who would have lawlessly hurled Him from a cliff, and that other mob at Jerusalem, who, with memories of Moses, would have stoned Him. Those who were first sent to arrest Him returned, saying that never man spake as He did. In the Garden, the officers with swords and staves fell backward at sight of Him. The multitude, who would have made Him a king, realized His majesty less clearly than His opponents, who were haunted with the idea that He was a King already. It was as a Monarch that the soldiers mocked this Royal Man; and Pilate, nailing it to His cross, refused to unwrite the eternal truth. Even the thief who died with Him was assured that He had done nothing amiss, and that His crucifixion was the accession of a Sovereign to His rightful realm; while the centurion, who contemplated "the felon's death," cried, "Truly, this was the Son of God."

The Miracle at Cana.

His greatness was in HIMSELF—not in what He did. Being what He was, His miracles were inevitable. The marriage at Cana came three days after Nathanael's confession, so that people were speaking of Him as Divine before He had shown them one sign of His material power. When He attended that wedding breakfast, He was a Man, still almost unknown; yet His mother—the one most intimate with His Person—who had waited thirty years for the fulfillment of the promises made to her at His birth, yet knew that He was Omnipotent, and that His hour would come. About what happened there was no premeditation. The six waterpots were there—

not for wine, but for washing. Having served their purpose, they were empty. The surprise of the governor was genuine. There was no explanation from the bridegroom. Nor did the memory of that miracle fade. Jesus went away quietly to Jerusalem, and, as it were, left the event to stand the test of inquiry—alone and unsupported by other marvels; with the result that when He returned to Cana—not avoiding the place, as an impostor would have done—He was immediately met by a nobleman, who was ready to trust to Him the fate of his dying child.

"Except ye see signs and wonders," said He, "ye will not believe." In form, it was a complaint; within the words lay the meaning of His Kingliness. A sovereign's authority is limited by his prerogative; his laws are known by the laws that he can suspend. Jesus seldom asserted His prerogative. He forbade the devils to acknowledge it openly—desiring no homage from hatred and rebellion; and where men denied it, He did no mighty work within their border. What happened was that people themselves assigned to Him His sovereign rights. The servants who drew the water, having seen Jesus and obeyed Him, expressed no surprise at the result. To the nobleman, it seemed impossible that his child could die in the presence of the Saviour. To Peter, it was obvious that the net, empty all night, should be lowered at the word of Jesus. When the tempest raged, it did not occur to them that Jesus was in danger; their suggestion was that He did not care; and this was what Martha and Mary said to one another when in His absence Lazarus died. Jairus was certain that one touch of the Master's hand would bring life to his daughter; and the afflicted

woman had equal faith in the hem of His garment. Blind men were sure that He could open their eyes, and lepers that He could cleanse them; while the centurion whose servant was sick considered that His authority was as absolute as that of an officer over his soldiers. When He fed the multitudes, the disciples at once submitted to His orders. When He walked on the waters, Peter doubted not His power, but only His identity; and when He said "Weep not" to the widow at Nain, the bearers of her son stood still, expecting something more.

Finally, take blind Bartimæus at Jericho—a mere beggar, of no account with the crowd, who yet cried, and again cried, with ever-increasing persistence, demanding mercy. See how that poor man's cry arrested the Son of God in His progress through the city; how, with irresistible authority, He *commanded* the man to be brought; how the multitude, which tried to silence him, changed round, told him to be of good comfort—to rise—"He calleth thee"; how the blind man sprang up, throwing away his garment, and received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way of happiness and enlightenment.

What Faith really is.

These people were not rich or learned or powerful; but what they had was faith, and it is from them in their need that we learn what FAITH really means. It was a seeing of the invisible that "made Bartimæus whole." When blind men came to Him, Jesus would use the very moisture of His mouth to show them, by their remaining sense of touch, that their sight would come from Him. When the deaf and dumb man wanted liberation, He looked up to heaven and

sighed, drawing a deep breath, that the man could see, though not hear, and so teaching him where lay His help in time of trouble. Where Moses used a rod, and Elijah a mantle, and Elisha a cruse of salt—some symbol other than themselves—our Lord had no need to go beyond a touch of love and a word of power when He said to the leper, "I will; be thou clean." It was from His lips that His scepter proceeded. These people recognized Him as King, and so derived their privileges as His subjects.

What aroused His wonder was not the miracles that He performed, but this faith or absence of faith among the people. The healing of the Syro-Phœnician woman was part of the day's allotted duty—but her persistence revealed the greatness of her faith. What astonished Him in the centurion's faith was the fact that the man knew how distance mattered nothing to the Lord of Eternity—a truth hardly realized even by Martha and Mary. Their faith, not His work, was to Him the miracle. He sternly rebuked the devils who acclaimed Him, for their knowledge was their condemnation; but Peter He blessed, for what he saw in the Redeemer was no rebel tribute, but a vision granted by God Himself. Others received Him as a prophet, and had the prophet's reward; or as a righteous man, and had the righteous man's reward. He did not denounce these Unitarians—He only made it clear that according to their faith would it be unto them. The limit of blessing was with them, not with Him. They take *part,* where He offers *all.*

But Simon, though the most erratic of the Apostles —who besought Jesus to depart from him because he was so sinful a man, and was, as Satan, tempting Jesus to avoid Jerusalem, and knew not what he

said on the Mountain of Transfiguration, and would not have the Master wash his feet, and boasted at the supper, and slept in the Garden, and struck off the ear which Jesus restored, and denied his Master thrice, and was withstood by Paul, because he was to be blamed—this Simon, so wayward, so impetuous, becomes Peter the "rock," built, with other living stones, into the very foundation of His Church—immovable, and why? Because, in Christ, he saw God, and so led the other Apostles. Against that faith the gates of hell cannot prevail—no miseries can quench that vision—and they who hold it bind on men their duties, and loose men from their infirmities, by a standard that includes both earth and heaven, the here and the hereafter, since their will is the will of the Everlasting.

XXVI

THE JUDGMENTS OF CHRIST

Conquest by Sacrifice — Love and Wrath — "Resist not an Injury" — Christ and War.

DESPITE the language of certain hymns that we sing, we do not find that any of the inspired Evangelists applied to our Saviour the softer adjectives, like "mild" and "sweet" and "kind." The strong, true, and often stern portraiture of the Gospels was wholly devoid of that air of yielding benevolence which pervades so many pictures and images of our Lord. He did not merely "mean well"; He went about actually doing the good, and allowed Himself no leisure until He had finished His work; even in His gentlest utterances there is the salt of duty, with its savor of judgment.

He did not say, "Come unto Me all ye that are lazy," and, like the Pharisees, leave others to lift their burdens, so grievous to be borne; "Come unto Me all ye that labor," was His invitation. He wanted laborers; He realized that they were too few for the fields of opportunity, white unto harvest. He would engage such even at the eleventh hour; to work, not for the meat which perishes anyway, but for the souls of men, which may still be saved. He wishes us to

be heavy-laden, not with worry, and sin, and care, and remorse of our own, but with others' burdens. Bearing these is His law, His yoke—not imposed upon us by compulsion, but taken by us of our free will, and shared with Him on those terms. He begins by giving us rest, we know not how; but He would have us in due course find it for ourselves, and so understand why it is bestowed on us. If His yoke is easy, it is because we have with Him one impulse, one sense of duty, which eliminates friction, jealousies, quarrels, lawsuits, so producing the utmost, because the best-directed, efficiency. If His burden is light, it is because it has ceased to be our own or even our neighbor's. He bears it with us, and so measures the weight, granting thus the strength by which it may be lifted.

Conquest by Sacrifice.

Our Lord's Beatitudes, too—they also were based not upon ease and indulgence, but upon conquest by sacrifice. To be poor in spirit, we must rid ourselves of pride and prejudice. We mourn for sin only when we have abandoned it. We are meek when we keep —restrain—our temper. We hunger and thirst after righteousness when (at least) we have painfully denied ourselves what is unrighteous. We are merciful when we expel our grudges and grievances and terrors and lust for revenge. We are pure in heart when, by God's grace, we are cleansed of vices. And we are peacemakers when from our minds we obliterate anger and suspicion and revolt.

It is not an easy religion, this of Jesus Christ. No idealist has ever set so lofty a standard as His, for He is unsatisfied unless we be perfect, even as our Father

in heaven is perfect. To Him, no peccadillo is venial. A heated word is murder. An evil glance is adultery. Even in an oath, His eye, so sensitive in its accurate discernment, detected evil. "Verily, verily, I say unto you," was His own *imprimatur* of truth, and He limits us also to a simple "Yea, yea" and "Nay, nay." Whatever emphasis exceeds this, He condemns as sacrilege. To swear by heaven, it is God's throne; by earth, it is His footstool; by Jerusalem, it is His city; by the hairs of our head —God only can count them, and change them from black to white. We are surrounded by God's greatness; therefore let our words be few, for by those words we are justified and by them we are condemned. Nor were these views of merely academic interest. One only of His Apostles ever swore; but that Apostle was Peter, and what he swore was that he knew nothing of Jesus. Bad language, as we call it, is really needless language; the idle word, which serves no purpose. Of every such utterance we shall have one day to give account, and it is only by our recognizing the keenness of our Lord's detection of sin that we can appreciate the love which led Him to bear it.

Love and Wrath.

We like to think of the kindness of the Lord Jesus when He blessed little children. We do not so often remember the anger, moved by which He spoke about those millstones that have bruised the feet of children, and are bound about the necks of men. The drunkard who is his own enemy—for him let us pray; but for the drunkard who is untouched by the miseries of his own girls and boys, pray doubly, for the temptation has him by the throat; he is plunged in a sea of

despair—it would be better for him that he had never been born. We are impressed by the humility with which He washed the disciples' feet. Do not forget that it was a rebuke to such as sought to be the greatest, and an assertion of His sole mastery over us; a warning to Peter, a judgment on Judas. Within a few hours, Peter, thus blessed, was weeping bitterly; while Judas hanged himself above Aceldama, the field of blood. For judgment, Jesus came into the world—to show us God; the love of God assuredly, but the wrath of God no less.

And His test for us is not whether we go to church and chapel, or otherwise call Him "Lord, Lord." He asks whether we have helped those who suffer. It is not enough that we should be sorry for them, and send a subscription to some society. What we give in money is good, but it is only the repayment of a loan which, in due course, will be called in by the Almighty Creditor. What He claims is that eternal part of us, which we are able to give or withhold, here and hereafter; it is the soul of us—the whole soul—that must enter into His work. The hungry—have we fed them? Surely we might have shared His daily bread, for it is generously bestowed. The thirsty—have we given them drink? One cup of His living water, springing up within us—why withhold it? The naked—do we clothe them? Or is our righteousness, like theirs, no better than filthy rags? The sick—do we visit them, or are we ourselves in need of healing? The prisoners—do we enter their narrow cells, or is it that we cannot leave our own?

He does not ask of us more than we can undertake. He knows that we cannot ourselves provide the bread and the water and the clothing, or ourselves heal the

sick and liberate the prisoners. But He does hold us answerable for the personal service that we can undertake; and if we neglect it, we become strangers to Him. For these people, so hungry, so ill-clad, so sick, are they for whom He died. Where they are, there is He, waiting for us to keep our appointment. If we refuse so to do, then He does not know us—not, that is, as fellow-laborers or yoke-fellows, but only as workers of iniquity. This word iniquity does not mean, of necessity, anything very bad—iniquity is often quite respectable—but simply describes the deeds of a servant who is "unprofitable," because the aims of his life are misdirected.

"Resist not an Injury."

When our Lord said, "Resist not evil," He did not mean, "Condone evil," or "Forgive evil," for none can pardon sin but God alone. This much-debated command is simple enough when you read it as, "Resist not an injury," or, as the Lord's Prayer calls it, "a trespass." Forgive your brother, not seven times only, but seventy times seven, since it is without limit that God has forgiven you; and whatever is now done amiss is, not against you, but against Him. If a careless servant had broken Mary Magdelene's alabaster box of ointment, very precious, who can say what punishment would have been inflicted by that woman, with the seven devils within her? But loving much, because forgiven much, she broke it willingly as a gift for our Lord. If useless to Him, to her also it was useless. And when they drove the nails into His hands and feet, He did not seem to be conscious that His was the wrong. He did not say, "I forgive"—as if the injury were against Himself—

but "Father, forgive." It is not the ill-treatment of the Son of Man that is irreparable—"they know not what they do"; rather, the mortal sin is committed against the Holy Ghost—against the Light, the Knowledge, the revealed and realized Truth. You think that someone has injured you. Be it so; then you should forgive, as He did, because the injury against you cannot be as deep as the implied injury against your Father, who cares for you better than you have ever cared for yourself.

Our Lord—in this, as in other respects, living out His laws—did not resist injuries. When Peter struck off the ear of Malchus, the servant of the high priest, Christ restored it with a touch. He would not have His disciples fight for His deliverance from the civil power. When one of those same priestly servants smote Him on the cheek, He turned the other, and was smitten also by the Roman soldiers. When they took away His cloak, He gave them also His seamless robe. And when they compelled Him to go one mile to the judgment-hall, He went with them twain, even unto Calvary. But what was His argument? Pity for Malchus? Not only that. What stirred Him to the miracle was a sense of the peril to Peter's own life. It was not the cruelty of the sword only but the wastage of the sword that He condemned. As Jesus foretold, Peter did perish ultimately by cold steel; but our Lord saved his intervening years. The Christians who fled into the mountains were no shirkers. They were good troops, taking cover, and thousands of them endured a hideous martyrdom. If, in that judgment-hall, Jesus had returned blow for blow, then, humanly speaking, He would have died an easier death than the cross, but He could never have said,

as He did, "It is finished." To finish one's course is the ideal; to keep the faith is to be ready for death—but only as the last enemy to be conquered. He aimed not merely at overcoming Evil, but at overcoming it with Good.

Christ and War.

And this explains why Jesus never denounced war, whether past or future. He knew that He Himself was raising issues which would fling men into the fighting-line. When the centurion came to Him, He did not call upon him to lay down his arms, but healed his servant. The profession of soldier was to Him neither better nor worse than the profession of tax-gatherer, farmer, or fisherman. For the laws of a State were to Him an expression of God's law. The gift on the altar—that is, religion—is no payment of an overdue debt to a neighbor—that is, justice. The judge is right to enforce that debt, and the debtor is not free to complete his bequest for religion until the uttermost farthing has been paid where due. The dispensation of justice precedes the dispensation of grace, and the one must be satisfied before the other can be enjoyed. Hence the judge, hence the officer, hence the prison—all stamped with our Saviour's unmistakable "Verily." Hence His whip of cords which twice cleansed the Temple of the money-changers. Hence armies, hence navies, which must continue until He reigns in the heart.

Twice, I say, not once. How quickly those tables were set up again! On the one hand, He authorized the use of force against evil; on the other hand, He showed how little is achieved thereby. For it was that money from those tables—twice overturned—

that bribed Judas to betray Him. And it was only when He had won men's hearts that they laid all their possessions at the Apostles' feet. We do well to defend the weak and correct abuses. But in His presence the weak do not need defense, and abuses cannot raise their head. A woman in imminent peril of her life was brought to our Lord. He did not strike one blow in her defense, but wrote on the ground, and she was safe. It is as He writes His law on our conscience that we also go in peace.

XXVII

OUR SAVIOUR AND SUFFERING

Christ's Works and the "Greater Things"—The Divine Procedure—For Soul as well as Body.

OF our Lord's many miracles, we have only a particular record of thirty-three—one, that is, for every year of His life, one for every month of His ministry. Over the winds and waves, over plagues like leprosy, over fevers and diseases, over infirmities of the eye and the ear,—whether inherited or contracted,—and even over wounds like a severed ear, His prerogative was absolute. It extended to the growth of trees, the movement of fishes, the processes of chemistry, which transmute liquids like water into wine and solids like flour into bread; and to coincidences, like the penny found in a fish's mouth. To that prerogative, animals like swine were subject, and the devils themselves.

Yet embracing all nature, animate and inanimate, the prerogative was sparingly invoked. Our Lord always displayed a reverent consideration for the established order of the world. While He walked on the water, He did not abolish the laws of gravity. Peter at once fell when the link of faith between him and the Almighty was broken. While He stilled the tempest,

He left the world with air to breathe, and so taught us that our life depends even on the hurricane. He made wine out of water, not out of nothing; and in feeding the multitudes, He used what loaves and fishes there were, however few, and the fragments that remained over were carefully preserved for the future. When He observed His last Passover, He sent His disciples to prepare that sacred meal in the usual way; and while, on one occasion, He found a coin by His omniscience, the money in Judas Iscariot's bag was collected by ordinary methods. If people had not given it, humanly speaking, He and His missionaries would have starved. In all His works, His object was not to relieve us of our responsibilities. His religion was not legerdemain. He left us still to live our humdrum lives, but showed what a difference His presence makes in the kitchen, the counting-house, the ocean-liner, and the railway train. Environment remains, but He rules it.

Christ's Works and the "Greater Things."

So it was that He dealt with the solemn mysteries of pain and death. He did not, by putting an end to disease, give immortality to our bodies as we know them. I doubt whether His ministry made any appreciable difference to the census returns of the Roman Empire. All those who were raised from their beds or from the tomb ultimately fell ill again or otherwise died. What He granted to them was what He grants to us—a brief postponement, which shall teach that our times are in God's hands. When He came, He found that men and women were—so to say—beaten by their sufferings, by their hunger, by storms, and by circumstances. The love of God was

obscured. People clutched at charms, and luck, and quackery, and hypnotism. The Redeemer, stimulating courage, enlightening the reason, kindling love, led us again into the fight against our foes. The fire-brigade, the lifeboat, the orphanage, the hospital, arose out of His inspiration, and are among the greater things that He promised us because He was to go to the Father. By such means, the waste of life is gradually reduced. Pain and death are brought into line with the Divine purpose. Our opportunities in this world are won back for us; and it is not by violence, nor prematurely, that we pass beyond, but by orderly process, as Lazarus or the little maid, in His words, went to sleep. Death, with its terrors, becomes a gentle drawing of the curtain at nightfall, as when a child goes to bed to dream of the dawn.

In rendering special help, He was at times deliberate —as when He waited three days before coming to Lazarus; and at other times He was prompt—as when in a minute or two He raised the widow's son at Nain. In some cases, people made appeal to Him, but not in all. He it was who discovered the lame man at the pool of Bethesda and raised him to his feet; it was a definite, selective act. Yet there was no injustice to the great multitude of impotent folk—blind, halt, and withered—who received no assistance. They saw Him, they heard Him, but they did not desire anything of Him, preferring "the moving of the water" to the moving of His heart. They made their choice. A man who had faith was healed, but on superstition no blessing was bestowed.

It was not Bethesda, but Christ's presence at Bethesda, that brought the miracle. And if there are wonders at Lourdes for those who credit them, I

would say—it is not Lourdes that heals, but only Christ, and He can heal us anywhere. Nor, for us who are Protestants, is there special help in any particular church or chapel, or in the preaching of any particular clergyman or minister. The only thing that matters to us, when we need help, is that we should see Him; and when He leaves Bethesda, whatever Bethesda may be, the place becomes once more a mere pool —no more sacred than the Thames or the Ganges.

The Divine Procedure.

Again: He limited His help strictly to what was actually required of Him. The leper was cleansed, but the priest had to certify the fact. The paralytic was cured, but he had to be brought by his friends, and he was told to carry back his bed. When the temperature of Peter's wife's mother became normal, so did her household duties. He awakened the little maid, but they had to give her something to eat. He summoned Lazarus from the tomb, but his friends unwound the grave-clothes. He did not shatter God's laws of nature and duty. On the contrary, He taught us that God's laws are God's will, a personal rule, maintained from moment to moment—not by dull routine, but by His good pleasure. In thus interrupting the routine of nature, He disclosed the Authority behind it.

To our Redeemer there came at last the supreme question whether He would or would not invoke the Divine prerogative on His own behalf. The human race lay under the shadow of death; would He, as Son of Man and Son of God, exercise His power, and so escape? When He knelt in the Garden of Gethsemane, this was one of the issues—not, I think, the

only one—that wrung from His brow the moisture, like drops of blood. He had not known one day of illness, one pang of pain, but the actuality of suffering was no secret from Him. He knew, in advance, what would be the agony of head, of hands, of feet, and of heart, and His whole being craved for deliverance—"Let this cup pass from Me." But only on conditions. If He was thus to avoid the cup, it meant, either that we also must escape, or that, in our suffering, He must be separated from us. Having loved His own, He loved them unto the end. In all our affliction He must needs be afflicted. He had already foreseen that His followers would suffer many things and even lose their lives for Him. His question was already answered. "Not My will," said He, "but Thine be done." It was not, as some have thought, that He had no will apart from His Father's. His will was free as ours, but He surrendered it. He used no miracle to save Himself.

For Soul as well as Body.

That decision has shaken the world. Many are the people who, in every age, cry out to be healed. Our Lord's disciples counted it all joy to suffer with Him what He had suffered for them. As He refused deliverance for their sakes, so do they refuse it for His sake. In the Hebrews, where the tests of faith mount up to a climax, the height of heroism is—not stopping the mouths of lions, not victory over the armies of aliens, not triumphs over fire, but torture that was not stopped, mocking and scourging, temptation and the sword—the *not* receiving of the promise. As Jesus prayed three times that the cup pass from Him, so did Paul pray three times that the thorn be removed

from his flesh; yet he added, like the Saviour, that God's will must be done. We see the disciples in terror amidst the tempest, and saved by a miracle. We see Paul, a prisoner, the one cool man in a shipwreck. Beautiful may have been the picture of the sick and suffering who crowded around the Christ, and were healed; but nobler far is the silence of the hospital, where in skill, in service, and in anguish His Spirit rules supreme over soul as well as body.

Whether physical miracles have or have not ceased, it is not for me to say. For all I know—for all you know—our Saviour is honoring faith by arresting disease as frequently as ever He did in the days of His earthly life. But let us remember that He has deliberately changed the situation. He is no longer present with us in the body, but in the spirit. He teaches us that the body is only sacred as the vesture of the soul. He dealt with disease as a symbol of sin. The pain which follows sin was to Him a symbol of the guilt that follows sin. In curing disease and in alleviating pain He was frankly teaching us—He said so—His power to remove sin and pardon guilt. That power asserted, it may well be that the symbol is fulfilled. I see in the Christ not only One who worked wonders, but One who refused to work them.

So far from making much of those whom He healed in the flesh, our Lord permitted them, one and all, to pass into oblivion, their very names unknown, save of a very few, like Bartimæus and Lazarus and Malchus. He chose as His Apostles not those whom He rescued from physical disease and death, but men in the prime of life, sound in body and mind, and successful in their various callings. Simon and Andrew were fishers, and more than once they returned

to their trade. James and John left their father, Zebedee, in the boat with the hired servants, and were thus employers of labor. Matthew, the tax-gatherer, was rich. There is no suggestion that any of the other Apostles were incapable of holding their own in the world. The men that He enlisted were men of military age, who could pass the doctor. For them He opened up a wide career in which they were to make, not money, but history.

They were to be fishers of men. They were to know the long night of toil when they would catch nothing. The disciples were to see the Saviour in the dawn, and were to learn that He it is who fills the nets until they break—those nets which, with Him on the shore, had so often to be mended. And what worried Peter was not leprosy of the hand, but of the heart. He was like the man possessed of a demon, who begged Jesus to go away because he knew who He was. But, while he threw himself into the waters of remorse, every stroke that he struck for safety brought him, so strangely baptized, nearer to that gracious and helpful Person who was to be his Guide, from that day onward, even unto death. To Peter and his friends, conversion meant a new landscape. It opened vistas of achievement previously unimaginable. The winds and the waves, the boat and the nets, the clinking coin, were all suddenly illuminated by a Presence, who was sight to the eyes, hearing to the ears, speech to the dumb, and life to the dead. And when, in later years, they wrote of the Redeemer, their amazement over the particular miracles that they had seen was gradually dissolved in a deeper and more reverent wonder at the glory of Him who lived in their souls, a greater Miracle Himself than all He accomplished among men.

XXVIII

THE MASTER AND THE TWELVE

The Commission "Go"—The Snare of Personal Success—"Nothing that is not His best."

MOSES enrolled twelve tribes for conquest, but while they mastered the Canaanites, they did not obliterate evil. Our Lord began His work, not with twelve tribes, but with twelve men, undistinguished by genius, and some of them so unlearned that their very pronunciation was defective. He did not send them to college, or teach them theology, as we read it to-day. He said no word to them about architecture and organs and choirs and painted windows and ritual, but kept them near to Himself, where they could best learn—first, the need of the people; and, secondly, the Redeemer's power to save. The kind of subject that He discussed with them was not the unknown and undiscoverable origin of a manuscript, however interesting might be that matter to the curious, but real questions, affecting our happiness—as, for instance, whether His Gospel is suitable for children or only for grown-up people; and why miracles depend on prayer, which is an approach to God, and fasting, which is a denial of

self; and what the parables meant. Some of these twelve men became famous; others are only names to us. But all alike started with average abilities, as if He would show us by their example how much He can make of anyone who submits to the rules of His companionship. He even declared that these true disciples of His would one day occupy thrones, and judge the twelve tribes of Israel, thus sharing His own glory. To us, a leader of men is he who can obtain the votes of men. He knew that the real leader is he who has a vision of God.

The Commission "Go."

He did not shut up His followers in monasteries, or bid them spend years in a theological seminary, but He stirred them at once to deliberate initiative. Having been disciples who were taught, they became apostles who were sent. "Go" was His first word to them after their call; "Go" was again His last word to them before He ascended. Go, not into the study or pulpit or university as such, but into the world, among the people; enter their homes, tell them the News, heal them, cleanse them. Freely ye have received, freely give. Go first to the nation you know well; go afterwards to all nations. Be ambitious. Let your quest absorb every power—the soul that *asks* in reverence; the intellect that *seeks* with patience; the body that *knocks* with energy. Yet in all your hopes recognize Another beside yourself. Let your happiness be *a gift,* granted by God's goodness; *a treasure,* found by His guidance; a home, *thrown open* to you by His love. But let all your initiative be hallowed by reverence. Asking is not demanding, seeking is not snatching, knocking is not

house-breaking. Be not like robbers, who climb up another way into the sheepfold—whose religion is a cloak for self-will—but understand that every quest, duly made with the whole being of man, has an immediate reward. All who ask, receive; all who seek, find; to all who knock, it is opened. Even in the world, if men and women have an aim and resolutely pursue it, they usually get what they want—sometimes good, sometimes bad. But in His kingdom everything worth having is free to everybody. As St. Paul put it, we have all IN CHRIST.

The Kingdom of Heaven was not a half-empty church, very dull and very respectable. It was a territory that suffered violence, and the violent took it by force. It is a place where Salvationism, Socialism, Tolstoyism—any ism that submits to the One Master—may raise its voice. The complaint of our Lord was that the disciples were so slow to ask anything in His Name. Whatsoever ye thus ask, He declared, I will do it. If two or three of you agree on a matter, whatever it be, you will prevail with the Almighty. The letters of these words were as carefully chosen as the phrases of a title-deed. The promise is limitless, but the conditions are exact. If prayer is to be effective, it must be made, not in the name of a patriarch, as was the custom of the Jews, or of a saint, as is sometimes the custom of Catholic Christians, nor must we put our own desires into the form of a prayer, and of necessity expect an answer; we must pray in the Saviour's Name, which means that we must only offer prayer for what He would Himself pray if He were in our position. In drawing our checks on the bank of faith, we must not forget that without His endorsement they are mere scraps

of paper. Our profits, our luxuries, our pleasures, our whims, are all excluded by that test, and let us never forget that the test is social. He safeguards prayer against idiosyncrasy, selfishness, and monomania. When we pray, can we find some other of our Lord's friends, as intimate with Him as we are, who will with his whole soul join us in our petition to the Great King? You wish a life to be spared. Are you certain that your doctor, who has so often seen the sufferings of a long illness, is equally eager thus to urge Providence? You want a war-bonus on wages. Have you considered that your prayer may inflict hardship on those who, less well organized than you are in your mine, need their coal this winter? Do you pray to *our* Father, as of a family, or to *my* Father, as if you were His only child? To every Act there is the Royal Assent, but no Bill becomes an Act unless it be with the consent of Lords and Commons. The preliminaries must be observed. The two must agree. And with prayer also, the assent of the Almighty is the final act which crowns obedience to His will.

The disciples themselves had to learn this. James and John, relying not on His Name, but on a mother's pride, asked to sit, the one on His right and the other on His left hand, in His Kingdom. They only saw the glory of temporal power, and did not perceive its responsibilities, its perils, its suffering and weariness. After He had risen from the dead, His disciples begged Him to disclose the date on which that Kingdom would be set up. They discovered that in the Court of the King of kings there are no back stairs whereby men may clamber into preferment, and that the majesty of the Almighty reserves to itself the State

secrets of Omniscience. Ours it is to return to Galilee—to do our duty and, if need be, to suffer, knowing not the times and seasons, and reckoning not the reward. Believing as I do in prophecy and its fulfillment, I cannot but think that if we had all remembered what He said about *not* knowing particular dates of His coming, we should have been preserved from speculations which have gravely discredited the authority of Scripture among the careless and often caused trouble among the saints.

The Snare of Personal Success.

On these terms, the only results of His mission were apparent failure and a cruel death. Yet His disciples constantly discussed and even quarreled over the question who among them should be the greatest. Even in His presence there arose those ambitions in pursuit of which monarchs have desolated continents, men of science have sacrificed ease and comfort, athletes and explorers have hardened every fiber of their being, captains of commerce have tightened their purse-strings, and politicians, not less arduously, have courted the multitude. There, as they walked with Him, those men—imagining that they had left all to follow Him—displayed that passion for personal success which to-day too often animates the Pulpit, the Press, the Legislature, Society, and War itself. We advertise one another, covet titles and decorations, and are puffed up and flattered by the camera. It is this rivalry between man and man, as transferred to nation and nation, that deluges civilization in blood. Our Lord foresaw it. He knew that peoples would rise against peoples. He noticed how the princes of the Gentiles exercise authority. What

we call Prussianism was no surprise to Him. And He condemned it. "It shall not be so," said He, "among you."

Political and ecclesiastical preferment, on which we count so much, lies wholly outside His scheme of service. Twice at least did He tell His disciples that the first would be last and the last first; nor was it an empty paradox. Slowly but surely the often tragic history of mankind has driven home His lesson, that the satrap, if he is to be tolerated, must become a civil servant, and that a priest is one who renders help. The most powerful statesman in the greatest of Empires is to-day no Cæsar, or Imperator, or Sultan, or Maharajah, displaying the ensigns of force and the regalia of plunder. He is the *Prime Minister*—the one whose duty and office it is not to be ministered unto but to minister. The men who to-day govern the most dazzling of all Asiatic empires affect no trappings of Oriental magnificence, but are clothed simply as civilians. The wisdom of Christ thus works as an inevitable law among men who may seldom mention His Name. He controls the great, so that the heir to the most stable throne in the world acts by the motto, *Ich Dien*—"I serve"; while the rest of us, in our narrower lives, are healed of our pompousness, our silly pretensions, our toadying, as it is called, and become in Him of a right royal dignity. In science, in art, in business, in every walk of life, the greatest is he who submits himself—not indeed to his fellow-men, for it was no system of mastership and slavery that our Lord set up—but to truth, to patient study, to duty, to the will of God, however made known. It is serving without servility; and if we are teachable people, we cannot expect honors greater

than our teachers. Whatever was refused to Him should not be sought by us.

For nineteen hundred years we have seen how seldom the great ones accept Him. In one of His parables—of the marriage-feast—our Saviour, knowing all things, pictured what still happens. The man who belongs to a county family thinks first of his land; a second, who is in trade, is absorbed by his farm or merchandise; and a third lives for domestic ease—for his wife, whom he might have taken to the feast, but instead reserves for his own sole enjoyment. Ill indeed has been society's treatment of God's messengers. His Bible and those who preach it—how seldom are they honored; how often are they sneered at with contempt! If the ambassadors of the Almighty are warned against anger, it is only because a greater wrath at these things than theirs fills the loving heart of their Father. He sends forth armies, He destroys those murderers, He burns their cities. Not one of them comes to the feast, for not one of them was worthy. He judged them, not by what they possessed, but by what they appreciated. They kept their lands, their trade, their homes; they lost, because they despised the joy of life.

"Nothing that is not His best."

Although His guests came from the highways and the hedges, being vagrants who have no rest save at His table, and were halt and maimed and blind—that is, people whom life has injured—He offers them the fare made ready for the noblest. Like a great doctor, He gives to the poorest of us nothing that is not His best. He provides us with a wedding garment—His own righteousness, or habit of mind—and only asks

that we put it on; for there is no place at His banqueting house for the man who comes there self-satisfied, as if conferring a favor on the Redeemer. It is an occasion of exquisite courtesy and thoughtfulness towards Him and towards others—the whole Law (or duty), the whole Prophecy (or outlook) being summed up in love for God and love for one's neighbor as oneself. Nor is the wedding garment—the right habit of life—enough. The lamp, or symbol of religion, which we carry in our hands for all the world to see, must be, not empty, but full of oil—the oil of a grateful gladness; so that the lamp is visible by night as well as by day, not only beautiful in design, but *shining*. The oil is ever available; there is no license needed for its purchase. Indeed, we have but to take it, and if we fail to do this, no after-attempt to buy it, by sacrifice and effort, will avail us. The oil is a gift, or we have it not. And that lamp should be full which is to burn through the long night.

Thus sensitive and thus solemn is the Romance of our Salvation; thus delicately responsive to right and wrong impulse is our happiness in Christ. If you begin, says He, be ready to finish. Count the cost. It is a tower of strength and refuge that, with My help, you are building. It is a country that, by My grace, you are conquering. It is a field that, for My sake, you are plowing. It is a marriage that you are celebrating—and marriage is indissoluble.

XXIX

LIGHT CHALLENGES DARKNESS

Nicodemus in Two Parts—Christ's Prudence and Tact—Christ and Miracle.

THE death of Christ—the supreme drama of history—was prophesied. Many nations in distress have yearned for a deliverer who would triumph. Isaiah, who predicted the coming of the one Redeemer, also announced that He would be despised and rejected. In those two words, chosen with the exquisite accuracy of Scripture, is summed up that hostility to our Lord which was at first latent and afterwards avowed. By his inspired prevision, the prophet foresaw, not only the splendor of the Messiah, but the depravity of men and women who would slay Him. Until people themselves are good, how can goodness be popular?

Not for one instant did Jesus misjudge the enmity of the Jews. Before the evil impulse had been disclosed, He declined to commit Himself to the chief priests at Jerusalem. He found more faith in Galilee, the region of duty, than in the Temple, consecrated to religion. Peter, the fisherman, was ready to fling himself openly at the Saviour's feet, whereas Nicodemus, the politician, came to Him by night, as if he

must calculate consequences before publicly associating himself with a Teacher sent from God. Jesus believed not in night work but in day work. He suspected every deed of darkness. The cowardice of Nicodemus, the fruitless fishing of His disciples, the treachery of Judas, and the denials of Peter, were all of the night. It was when men slept that Satan sowed his tares. The night side of our cities was what He came to redeem. It was the night that He constantly attacked by prayer; they who dared not arrest Him in the day chose the night for their plot, and the triumph of His resurrection lay in this—that by it He conquered, not death alone, but darkness. When He saved men, He needed no shaded lamps, no soft music, no séance, no Delphic oracle. He exposed His gospel to the full light of day, He would have it proclaimed from the housetops. He was against a whispered creed; He had no use for learned and incomprehensible formulæ.

Nicodemus in Two Parts.

To Nicodemus, the master in Israel, Jesus declared bluntly that he could not even see the Kingdom of God; he could not dimly appreciate the secret of happiness unless he be born again, born of the water of repentance and the spirit of consecration; unless he looked up to the Christ, not as a Teacher only, but as a Saviour, just as the Israelites, bitten of serpents, looked up to the ensign of sin expiated which Moses raised in the wilderness. All this glittering worship at Jersalem was merely a mirage in the old and still untraversed desert, with its Sinai, it manna, its golden calf, and its poisonous reptiles. For Nicodemus, there could be no promised land—indeed, no Pisgah, from which he could see the promised land—

unless he took his place humbly among the guilty and the perishing.

What Nicodemus answered, we only know by the sequel. When the Sanhedrin discussed the first attempt to arrest our Lord, suddenly this once-timid trimmer stood forth alone, and asked by what law any man is condemned unheard. "Art thou also of Galilee?" they cried. "Search and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." They were mistaken, for it was on a Galilean mountain that Elijah built his altar and called down fire thereon from heaven. It was over Zebulun and Naphtali that the Light was to shine. To this they were blinded by the bitter jealousy between Jerusalem and Galilee—between creed and conduct, between the scribes and the common people—which continues unto this day.

The love of Nicodemus for Christ, though still unconfessed, could be no longer concealed. And when, a year or two later, all had forsaken Jesus and fled, this man allied himself boldly with Joseph of Arimathea, and brought no less than one hundred pounds weight of spices for the burial of the Master; his gift suggesting that he did not believe in the hope of a resurrection, but was honoring a Friend, now defeated and discredited, and so taking his place on the losing side. Christ had made a man of him, had cured his cowardice and corrected his opportunism.

The attitude of the Jews was disclosed by their behavior towards John the Baptist. What our Lord said to Nicodemus was intimately reminiscent of John's words about "the generation of vipers"—of the serpents in the wilderness, and about the baptisms of water and fire. Yet although John came as a disinterested evangelist, confessing explicitly that he

was not the Christ, the meaning of his message did not touch the conscience even of Nicodemus, let alone of the other rulers. When John was arrested by the king, there was no protest in Jerusalem, where his father had been for so many years an honored priest. When a foul murder followed the arrest, not a ripple of emotion was discernible in the Temple. The case is the more extraordinary because John stood for a simple moral issue on which Pharisees, and Sadducees, and Herodians, and Zealots were all agreed. No one defended adultery. For that offense they would have stoned alive a humble woman. Yet, when a princess committed the crime,—was taken, as they put it, in the very act,—and aggravated her guilt by assassination, they did not say one word. Jesus noted their silence, and held them responsible for the blood of the prophets, including the Baptist. Sometimes we think that His interpretation of the law was severe, but His censures, like His mercies, had this unusual quality—they applied equally to court and cottage. In all alike He detected sin, to all alike He offered mercy; and we may be sure that some of us, who before the War were more interested in the dance of Salome than in the hideous crime of which it was a part, would not have escaped His sorrowful condemnation. It was to Jesus, not to the chief priests, that John's bereaved disciples came for comfort and encouragement.

Christ's Prudence and Tact.

Fully understanding the desperate and complex malady that cursed the people, our Lord touched the evil with tenderest prudence. He knew that Jerusalem was drifting into a delirium, unparalleled for

ferocity; and millions, who never read a word of Josephus, have trembled at the few poignant sentences in which our Lord depicted Judea's coming doom. To save that city from itself, He devoted many months of His three years' ministry. Patient with prejudice, He postponed His mission to the Gentiles, lest the lost sheep of the house of Israel be thereby estranged. He veiled His Divinity, speaking of Himself constantly as the Son of Man, and strictly forbidding His Apostles to publish abroad His glory on the Mount, until He had suffered. As they had rejected John as a man, so it was as a Man that they first rejected Jesus. The Holy Babe was denied protection. The Boy had no patron. None saw the dignity of the Carpenter. The Preacher was sneered at as a Galilean. It was not the difficulty of a dogma, like His Divinity, that set them against Him. Neither they nor we have that excuse. In human affairs—as we call them—we are ever denying Him; we crucify not our Deity only, but our neighbor. In Christ, we slay not our Master alone, but our brother.

With gracious tact, our Lord avoided contention and threw Himself into the task of healing the sick, of which everybody could approve. With those who were ready to help Him, He freely shared His power, and He welcomed the co-operation of all who brought to Him the afflicted. Here was not only a personal salvation but a national policy, outlined with consummate wisdom. He taught the people to battle against more intimate enemies than Rome. But they were indifferent. There, under the shadow of the Temple,—like some squalid street within a stone's throw of a great cathedral,—lay festering multitudes of diseased persons. The scribes did not invite Him to

the Pool of Bethesda. They did not perform one act that would have relieved or reduced that mass of suffering. He went there by Himself, single-handed, and no one begged Him to remain.

Some writers suggest that there was, after all, a shadow of excuse for those who hated the Redeemer, because they were, so to say, startled into resentment by His sudden claim to be Divine, and by the scorn of His denunciations. The theory is simple fiction. He approached the people as a Healer, not as a Judge; and with the instinct of a great Physician he avoided any word that would arouse fever where fever would be fatal. In this respect, He is an example to all who would spread His Gospel, to avoid controversy; to deal mercifully, not ruthlessly, with guilt; to set forth the truth in winsome fashion. It was after His rejection as Healer, not before, that He denounced the Jews. The sin that He denounced was this rejection—that they laid on others burdens which they would not bear themselves, and, refusing to enter the Kingdom themselves, shut the door for others likewise. His lament was, not that they resisted His warning voice, but that they would not be gathered, like chickens, under His wing, and so preserved from the desolations at hand.

Christ and Miracle.

Matters were brought to an issue by an event as historic as the conversion of Martin Luther. There lay in Jerusalem a man born blind. On the Sabbath day, our Saviour saw him as He passed, and, in love, healed him. Asserting His personal authority over human vision, He made clay and anointed the man's eyes; and then, to evoke the man's faith, He uttered

a command which had to be obeyed. As no garment of His remains, or fragment of His cross, or other relic, so He bade the man wash away that clay, showing that it was but clay. There was no transubstantiation, there was no miracle in the clay itself. What mattered was that the man went, washed, and came back seeing—a living example of Christ's salvation as an enlightenment of the mind.

The rulers were alarmed. Like other oppressors, they preferred an ignorant to an instructed people, and recognized that no liberty is so dangerous to the tyrant as liberty in Christ. Theirs was the cruel view that physical calamity is the fault of the sufferer, or of his parents; that health is not so much an evidence of God's goodness as of man's righteousness; and their only difficulty was to decide on whose shoulders they, as judges, were to lay the blame. To our Saviour, even congenital blindness may reveal the glory of the Father—the story of little Muriel, in *John Halifax, Gentleman,* is an illustration—and where others censured, He blessed. Hearing of His deed, they questioned the man's parents, who—though they had been so recently defended and consoled by the Saviour—did not stand by their son. The faith was already dividing households against themselves. The man himself held his ground, but for one reason only—he had personal experience. Beyond that experience he was at sea; for when they told him that Jesus was a sinner, he answered that he could not speak as to this one way or the other. One thing only he knew—"Whereas I was blind, now I see." Unable to shake his evidence, they cast him out, declaring that he was altogether born in sin—yet presumed to teach them!

With the battle rapidly broadening, Jesus, the Captain, who forgets no single soldier, found time to bind the wounds of His first casualty. The man was deserted by friends and cast out by the Church; who of us can say where his eyesight would have led him if, like Bartimæus, He had not seen our Lord as the Central Figure of the spreading landscape? Mere enlightenment was not enough—nor is it to-day. We need to add reverence to our knowledge, and worship to our discoveries. We need not only vision but a vision of the Redeemer.

This miracle raised momentous issues. Despite their pride of birth, the Jews themselves asked: "Are we also blind?" The answer was—Yes, they were blind; but on the other hand this was not the blindness, though from birth, which Jesus so emphatically denounced. We all suffer from it. Some of us, to the end of our lives, see men as trees walking—mere automata, without a soul to be saved or feelings to be considered. What condemns us is not so much this natural blindness, but the fact that, knowing it, we yet say we see. It is not the original sin that is so troublesome—not in itself; what our Lord dealt with severely is the sin that "remaineth." It is because our deeds are evil that we prefer darkness to light. And the most terrible of all woes is reserved for those who, being blind themselves, come forward in their cruelty and pride, as guides unto others, so that the leader and his followers fall together into the ditch. To-day, there are many voices heard amid the chaos—men who in effect say, "I am he." Let him beware who renders counsel to an afflicted Christendom, except as he derives it from the Eternal Wisdom.

XXX

REBELS AGAINST THE DIVINE

The Way to God Open—Lord of the Sabbath—The Word was God.

WHILE obedience to our Lord developed the good in people, it seemed as if revolt against Him stimulated the evil. The Rabbis had listened to Him as a boy with kindly wonder, and all that we could say against them was that, in carelessness, they lost sight of Him. When next they encountered Him, carelessness had turned to disdain—what good thing, they asked, was to be expected of Nazareth? But, in a few brief months, disdain had become a murderous intent. The intent hardened into a plot. The plot was developed by espionage, and fomented by bribery. Its growth turned an Apostle into a traitor. Witnesses were suborned to commit perjury, and an accomplice was Barabbas, a convicted robber. Wagging their heads and taunting Him as He suffered, the Rabbis poisoned their zeal with cruelty, and their justice with revenge. They were men utterly corrupt, yet they suggested that His most blessed body, which saw no corruption, would defile the sacrifice of bulls and goats, which was a gross hypocrisy. When He lay in the tomb dead—imprisoned by a

great stone, immovable with the forces of Nature, His resting-place sealed by the impress of human authority, and guarded by irresistible military power —even then His silence aroused their terror. Carelessness, disdain, murder, conspiracy, bribery, espionage, treachery, robbery, revenge, hypocrisy, terror—all these evil influences were concentrated against Him. Over them all, in His resurrection, He triumphed. On the authority of their own guard, they were told of that triumph; yet with this witness to the truth before them, they persisted in error; and in watching the drama, we learn by what unfathomable risks the best of us are surrounded when we see the Saviour yet do not love Him.

The Way to God Open.

What challenged the issue were circumstances in themselves apparently accidental. When Jesus saw that people like the paralytic man or the woman who wept over His feet were truly repentant, He told them that their sins were forgiven, He sent them away free—with their guilt removed—and with His command to sin no more. The scribes murmured, realizing instantly what claim was implied. They knew that it belongs neither to popes nor priests, but to God alone, to grant absolution to men. They knew that only by Divine grace can men hope to cease from sin. And, to this extent, they were right. It is to our Father direct, without intermediary of any kind, that our Saviour bids us to pray for forgiveness and the strength to resist temptation. In the Parable of the Wicked Servant, the debt to man compares with the debt to God as one hundred pence compares with ten thousand talents. Only the King

could cancel this infinite liability; and if Jesus be not the King, then it follows that He has no right to pardon. He could not, therefore, ease the consciences of men without exercising a Divine prerogative, and they who deny His Deity are left inevitably to face the conscience, unaided.

Indeed, the case goes further than this. In forgiving sin, as Son of Man, Jesus accepted an obligation to pay the penalty for sin; with Him there was no compounding with one's creditors. A bankrupt for money which perishes may be let off with so much in the pound; but a bankrupt in things eternal, which do not perish, cannot even forgive himself until payment has been made of the uttermost farthing. Even the high priest, recording the last flash of that revelation which in the old days had shone from the stones of destiny, Urim and Thummim, and so fulfilling the ancient Hebraic divination, declared it expedient that one man should die for the people. It was thus not against some emotional benevolence that they murmured when they heard Him forgive sins. They were trampling underfoot the love that drew Him to the cross. They were accusing Him of issuing promissory notes which He had no intention of honoring.

Having denied His mastery over evil, they next rebelled against His lordship over the good. He Himself regarded the Sabbath as a Divine institution. So far from inaugurating a Continental Sunday, He attended the synagogue, and told His disciples to pray that their flight from danger be not in winter or on the Sabbath day, thereby indicating that the Sabbath is as needful to our welfare as the unalterable seasons or any other ordinance of the calendar. It

was just because He so kept the Sabbath that He met at public worship the man with the withered hand. We should notice that they did not doubt His power to restore that limb—to restore it whole as the other. All that troubled them was the question whether He would do this on the Sabbath. What aroused their malice was not that the miracle was a delusion, but that it was a crime. On another occasion, when He told the impotent man to take up his bed and walk, their anger rose to madness, and then it was that they communed together what they might do to Him. The controversy was renewed when His disciples plucked the ears of corn and rubbed them in their hands, so, in a rabbinical sense, breaking the Sabbath by reaping and threshing and winnowing the grain.

To our Lord, the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath, and the Son of Man—that is, Jesus, as our Brother—is Lord of the Sabbath. Each of us is responsible for arranging how best we can spend our leisure. When he was in need, David ate of the shewbread, reserved for the priests, showing that no symbol of God is so sacred as man created in His image; and that, ultimately, when the truth is, as it were, tested by the hunger that is unto death, the king is priest, and man becomes both priest and king. The stricken soldier lies upon the altar of a shell-scarred church, and hallows it; it would be the same if he were a stricken prince or a stricken prelate; and we distinguish between *the principle* of the Sabbath and those scruples that, if pressed as the Jews pressed them, would derange our hospitals—yes, our hospitals for the Jews themselves—and make of the Sabbath a day, not of rest, but of special

pain and suffering. To the beast that had fallen into a pit, the Jews at once rendered help. Here, as in the Temple, they paid more attention to bulls and goats than to men and women. And it was not until Jesus spent a Sabbath in the tomb, resting therein after His work of redemption was finished, as His Father rested when the Creation was complete—it was not until then that man was delivered from his horrible pit, his miry clay.

Lord of the Sabbath.

We have seen that, in forgiving sins, Jesus asserted His Deity. In His use of the Sabbath, that grave claim was also implied. "My Father," He said, when He discussed the matter, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Idleness is no more a virtue on the seventh than on any other day, and there is no day, no hour of the day, when God's love is inactive. He is always busy—making the sun to shine, healing old wounds, ripening precious fruits, and granting life to every creature. In curing an impotent man, Jesus was continuing the intimate co-operation within the Triune Godhead which had been His since the world began. He was doing God's will on earth as God's will is done in heaven. And this was why they sought the more to kill Him, because He not only ruled the Sabbath, but justified His rule by making Himself, thereby, equal with God. Not for one instant did He surrender to their enmity His time and His opportunities. Until they bound His hands, He went on healing. The only Sabbath on which He lay silent and motionless was the Sabbath when He lay dead. And while, with Him thus slain, they had their triumph, from that moment their

Sabbath disappeared. It was not on the Sabbath, or seventh day, but on the first day of the week that He rose again, His lordship vindicated. To change the calendar is for a private individual an almost impossible task; but the world now takes its week, not from Adam, not from Moses, not from the scribes, but from Jesus of Nazareth. Without legislation, without armies, without navies, He has established His claim to be Lord even of the Sabbath.

The Word was God.

His Deity was thus no academic dogma, left to theologians. It interested everyone. The man born blind could not believe that he had received his sight from a sinner; his Friend Unknown must have come from God. Once satisfied that Jesus who talked with him was this Son of God—that none else was He—his hesitation vanished, and he worshiped. The tempestuous debates in the Temple, like some violently oscillating compass, ranged ever around His Deity. If they "tempted" Him with questions about the tribute money, about divorce, and other perplexities, it was to find out whether He was really "Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." Nor could they avoid certain comparisons. Was He greater than Moses? Was He greater than David? Was He greater than Abraham? Even from that searching test He did not flinch. Standing there, with the Temple above Him, with the priests around Him, and with His mind surveying the long and momentous panorama of Israelitish destiny, He answered, in words that ring through all ages: "Before Abraham was, I am."

Against this they could not argue. They durst

not even continue to ask Him questions. But they could and did take up stones to stone Him—fighting the physical in Him where the spiritual was beyond them; and if He went His way unharmed, it was to show them that, in conquering death, He could choose the manner of it. He could escape at will, and He could suffer at will. And in the end the death to which He did submit was the most awful conceivable for man.

As with the Sabbath, so with the Temple. On the one hand, He rid it of the money-changers; on the other hand, He announced its destruction. As God's throne, it belonged to God, and was sacred. Because it belonged to God, therefore, Jesus could cleanse it, dispose of it, rebuild it. And He has done so. The Temple, like the Sabbath, has, in fact, disappeared. A new Temple, like a new Sabbath, has, in fact, arisen. That Temple is His Body, of which those who love Him are members. His teaching about the Temple, which to the Jews seemed blasphemy, has become for us as nations a world-wide history, and for us as individuals an intimate personal experience. In three days, He did raise a Temple, not made with hands. This Temple now overshadows every other temple; and while the living stones of His Church are built securely around Him as Chief Corner Stone, of that golden Temple at Jerusalem where He uttered His prophecies, not one stone, however great, now rests upon another.

Have I made the issue plain, I wonder? It was plain enough to the Jews. When they considered His forgiveness, or His Sabbath, or His Temple—indeed, whatever subject they brought to His test—the result was the same. Above and beyond the

matter in hand, however profound its importance, there rose a still larger truth; and that truth, looming now dimly, now clearly, through the mists of prejudice and anger and malice, was His Deity. We may forget it, evade it, deny it, question it; but, to us as to them, it ever returns unalterable, inaccessible, eternal in the heavens, yet spreading abroad over the homes and highways of men.

XXXI

THE INDICTMENT AGAINST OUR SAVIOUR

Wanted, a Man!—Christ and Home Life—The Worm and the Fire.

I WILL now proceed as plainly as I can with the precise issue upon which the Jews challenged our Lord. The Pagans then, as now, worshiped many gods. The Philosophers then, as now, subscribed to many theories. But the Jews and their Rabbis cleared the ground of gods and theories by surrendering themselves to an absorbing belief in one Everlasting, Omnipotent, and All-knowing Jehovah. "We know what we worship," was our Lord's tribute to this stupendous concentration of reverence on the Father of all. "Salvation," He added, "is of the Jews"—the reason being that to the Jews had been revealed the simple knowledge of God and duty, of right and wrong, which is the basis of Redemption. They knew that they had to deal, not with hypotheses, not with idols, but with Persons—the Almighty on the one hand, devils and angels and men and women on the other.

When, therefore, the Jew had to decide what he thought about Jesus, he was reduced to two alternatives. Either the Man of Nazareth came from God or He came from the Devil; either He was utmost

good or He was utmost evil; either He was Divine or He blasphemed. Since those days, men have sought to evade this supreme choice by formulating some kind of a middle solution, like Unitarianism, in one of its many guises. None of these compromises avails for more than a few years, and with a few enthusiasts. Sooner or later, we have, like the Jews, to face the main question, as they faced it—either to worship the Christ, or to reject or neglect Him. For months they watched Him, discussing His every act and word. Their verdict against Him was deliberate and considered. Their sin was that they knew it to be a lie. They said that He had a devil; that by Beelzebub, Prince of Devils, He cast out devils; that as a blasphemer, He deserved to die.

It was a desperate paradox, but it can be explained. To the Jew, as to us all, the nearest and most evident reality is not good, but evil; and in evil, therefore, it was most easy to believe. John came, neither eating nor drinking, and they said that he had a devil. Our Lord came, accepting hospitality and returning it, and again it was the devil that they attributed to Him. They were like the liar who cannot credit another man with speaking the truth, or a drunkard who is certain that all teetotalers are tipplers in secret. And their hypothesis is echoed even in our own day. Men and women, as respectable and as honored as the Rabbis, will have it that the Gospel is based, not on justice and truth and sanity and love; but on superstition, credulity, ignorance, unwholesome excitement, religio-mania—all the evidences of devilry—backed by documents that are not what they pretend to be. The Prince of Devils presents himself to our intellects as an angel of enlightenment, and scholarship, and

inquiry, and presents our Saviour as the arch-enemy of truth and good sense. In this controversy we, like the Pharisees, have to take one side or the other.

Wanted, a Man!

To those who abused Him, Jesus applied a cooling and final logic. He knew well enough that prejudices would obscure the path. He spoke of false Christs arising who would deceive even the elect. He told of persecutors who, in killing His disciples, would think that they were doing God's service. But He was fully convinced that Satan would never be so stupid as to cast out Satan. This would mean that the haunts of evil, being divided against themselves, must collapse, which is not what has happened. Among Christians, there are schisms and sects; but about wickedness, in all its forms, there is an impressive solidarity. Each iniquity reinforces the others, so that it is not one devil but a legion that must be expelled from the human heart—devils that speak with one voice, and act with one impulse, whether they possess men or swine. If the heart is to be delivered from such usurpers, it will not be by sowing dissension among the enemy. A strong man armed must arise and engage all devilry in mortal combat. A strong man—be it noted—not an archangel, or a ghost, or a sentimentalist—a *man,* strong because incarnate. And if there be amongst the Jews or amongst ourselves children who cast out devils, or otherwise resist evil, then do they testify, consciously or unconsciously, that our Lord defeated evil, not with evil but with good, that He was not devil but Divine.

Peculiarly malicious was the reference to Beelzebub, the lord of indulgence. When Jesus dined with publi-

cans, like Matthew or Zacchæus, or with a rich leper, like Simon, they said He was a wine-bibber, who battened on the plunder of the people. They did not realize that His Gospel was as much for the West End as for the East End; that there is as deadly a sickness of soul at a dinner party as there is in a gin-palace; that wherever He went—be it among rich or poor—His object was to make men and women "whole," to restore to them the full use of all their faculties, to give them the more abundant life.

Doubtless, the hospitality thus extended to Him by the wealthy was, spiritually considered, an imperfect devotion. He might have replied: "This is living to the flesh; I can have no part in it." But with a deeper wisdom He accepted from them what they intended to be in His honor. In due course, men like Matthew, who made Him a great feast, learnt more fully what banquet it was that He desired. It was in their hearts that they spread the table for Him, and when, in wisdom, He removed from them His Bodily Presence, they found Him again wherever there were poor and needy awaiting comfort.

Slander assailed Him most severely when He rescued fallen women. Even His disciples were amazed that, at the well of Samaria, He should talk openly with such an one. To Him, the publicans and harlots were nearer to the Kingdom than the scribes and Pharisees. If these latter had been really righteous, He would not have asked them to "change their minds"; it was only sinners that He called to repentance. But the point was that the Rabbis were like the man who says, so willingly, "I go"—and then stays where he is. It is far better to declare bluntly, "I won't go"—and afterwards decide to obey. The mo-

ment that the Samaritan woman was convicted of her shame, He spoke to her in loftiest language about worshiping God in spirit and in truth; and she listened, and, what is more, understood.

Christ and Home Life.

If He moved freely with people of no character, it was not that He held morals in light esteem. On the contrary, He said that "in the beginning"—the phrase which casually reveals His intimacy with creation—it was not so. God made male and female, and God unites them; let not man put asunder. Divorce was only a concession by Moses to our hardness of heart; and marriage after divorce is adultery. His standard in these matters was so utterly beyond us that—as He admitted—all cannot receive it. And so far was He from playing with the grave obligations on which home is founded that, unmarried Himself, He constantly blessed the home. It was at a wedding that He did His first miracle. It was Peter's wife's mother that He cured of a fever. And when the Baptist said that the Saviour's joy in His disciples was like the Bridegroom's joy in the Bride, He accepted the simile and developed it into parables and sayings of tenderest significance. The sinners loved Him much, not because they lacked guilt, but because they admitted guilt and were forgiven much. When, in an ecstasy of gratitude, such an one washed His feet with tears of repentance, and wiped them, humbly, with her hair, and kissed them in adoration, He did not ordain these acts as ceremonies, as the Pope has done, but, on the other hand, He defeated those who would have raised a scandal. Nowhere, declared He, would the Gospel be preached without mention of this

deed. What He looked at was the love that prompted the act, and the joy of salvation that inspired the love. And, although the occasion was not public in the usual sense, yet His prophecy has come to pass. What was seen by a score or two of people has been known to scores of hundreds of millions. Where we save reputations by suppressing the truth, our Lord defends His own by spreading it.

This, then, is the issue—awful in its momentous contrast—Is He Devil or is He Divine? Does He bewitch us or does He save us? Clearly, it was and is a matter of life or death. It is a question that we *must* answer. Despite all their denials, our Lord knew in Himself that they went about to kill Him. The Pharisees stood for the supremacy of the spiritual power; the Herodians asserted the temporal power; but they united against the Messiah, and their coalition was joined by the Sadducees. For the last time in her history, the priests, the Rabbis, the soldiers, and the people of Jerusalem were swayed by one impulse. Over His condemnation, Herod, the monarch, who ruled by hereditary privilege, and Pontius Pilate, the governor, who governed by efficiency, made up their perennial quarrel; and, with Him slain, all sides hoped for a conclusive peace. But what happened was that society, deprived of its righteous basis, broke up into fragments. The questions which Jesus answered with such authority when they "tempted" Him split up the nation into antagonisms so bitter that, when Paul came to be tried, no verdict for him or against him could be secured from a distracted Sanhedrin. A few years later, when the Redeemer's Gospel was drawing Jew and Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond and free, into one fold, the Temple area, with its

Pharisees and Sadducees and Herodians and Zealots, ran red with the blood of fratricidal strife; and His disciples, obeying His instructions, fled into the mountains, knowing well that where His love and sacrifice had been rejected, their witness was of no further avail. The stubborn citizens, who had refused to acknowledge the abomination of desolation within themselves, witnessed ultimately the abomination of desolation, standing where it ought not, within their Temple.

The Worm and the Fire.

As their cold rage against Him reached a climax, He spoke with a calm but fearful emphasis of retribution. On earth, there would be the destruction of their city and Temple, the ruin of their womanhood, the massacre of their babes. But beyond the grave—what then? He told of the worm—instrument of corruption—that dieth not; the fire—instrument of remorse—which is not quenched; of the soul, that endures eternal, after the body has been resolved, by decay or by burning, into its physical elements. He therefore set out to save men and cleanse men now. In this present life, He laid on us the sovereign responsibility of making our choice. Here must we wear the wedding garment. Here must we fill the lamp with oil. Here must we put His talents to fullest use. What we do, what we say, what we think and believe—all this He thus rescued from the trivial; and in His sight we stand, free agents of the future, among the angels and archangels. His judgments were, on the one hand, Divinely merciful; and on the other, Divinely terrible. Knowing our frame, remembering that we are dust, He pities our infirmities. He does

not condemn. He would not have us condemn one another. When they drove the nails into His hands, He begged forgiveness for them. The strokes of that hammer symbolized for all time the utmost conceivable sin of the flesh. There He healed—there He pardoned. Man's hand against His hand—that He forgave.

But man's spirit against God's Spirit—man's will against God's will—of that He took a graver view. The body is of time, the Spirit and our spirits are of eternity; and the Spirit will not always strive with man. If peace comes not by union, then it must come by separation; it is the only other way. If recent calamities have taught us nothing else, they have surely brought us back to the everlasting consequences of resistance to the Son of God.

XXXII

DENIED AND BETRAYED

The Bequest of Christ—A Missed Opportunity—The Seen and the Unseen.

LITTLE as we sometimes remember it, we all spend our allotted days under sentence of death. Though He was in perfect health, our Lord lived His life seeing thus the end. He faced many dangers, from tempest, from plague, from contagion of the leprous, from wild men and wild beasts; but He was never nervous—never worried. He quietly went on, doing the next thing, in full assurance that He was safe until His time should come. When hostility thickened around Him, He displayed no bravado, but regarded death as a grave fact, not to be treated lightly, as if it does not matter, but to be undertaken, like a journey, with steady courage and with wise preparation. Gradually He withdrew from Galilee, where had been the sphere of His social work; and as His disciples accompanied Him, they were "amazed" and filled with an ever-deepening awe. He said good-by to Capernaum and Bethsaida, those cities which had seen so much of Him and believed so little. Occasionally—as at Jericho, where He healed two blind men—He performed some miracle, showing that His

powers were undiminished—that it was not some impostor, but the Restorer of the ear of Malchus, whom they crucified. But He spent much time in retirement, living at Bethany with Martha and Mary; and in Him, at thirty-three years old, we see the dignity and the peace of old age. He was not embittered by apparent failure, but became the Friend and Companion of His disciples in the difficulties of their declining years. If they have to cross the Brook Kidron —which means "full of blackness"—the torrent that flows inexorably between the old Jerusalem and Mount Olivet, the threshold of the new, He went there first, and we can trace His footsteps. Long afterwards, His Apostles were constantly helped by the knowledge that they were dying, not alone, but with Him. And when John saw Him in splendor, one thing that he noticed was that the Ancient of Days, who was killed so young, wore above His brow a crown of snowy hair. I know of nothing, even in Scripture, more astounding in its inspired audacity than this declaration of the truth that in one awful day of suffering the hair of the Son of Man thus changed to pure white.

The Bequest of Christ.

Having no earthly property, His last will and testament was in unusual form. "Not as the world giveth," said He, "give I unto you." There was nothing in writing—no copyrights, no lawyers to be consulted, no deeds to be signed, no codicils. "My peace I leave with you"—that was His bequest as He went hence, and on that benefaction His heirs paid legacy duty, not in money, but with their heart's blood. Never were death-duties so ruthlessly levied,

yet so cheerfully paid, as in the Early Christian Church. Knowing that His possessions consisted entirely of those whom He had won, He named His Father and theirs as Executor, Trustee, and Guardian. In due legal phrase, uttered on His knees, He said: "Father, I will that they whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am." They were His investments, and with an intense tenacity He declared that not one of them should be lost. His title to His own was complete. "Thine they were"—by creation and eternal right—"and Thou gavest them Me"; the chain of ownership was complete, and must be maintained until the whole estate is redeemed and an account of it rendered. He did not test success in life by accumulated cash, but by the love of men and women and children. And even by that test, He died poor, for His friends were few and their loyalty failed. Yet, patient, He did not complain. He did indeed say, "I have given all, yet you are only twelve men, and one is a devil"; but in His very redeeming effort He remained utterly humble—"having loved His own, He loved them unto the end."

It was never His custom to condemn anything without giving something better. When Satan tempted Him in the wilderness, He turned away from earthly glory, as of no account; but on approaching the cross, with its exposure and shame, *glory* became His favorite word. Napoleon himself did not use it more often, and it was the thought of glory that sustained Him amid the gloom. To the Herods who tried Him, glory was a garment that has to be put on—a robe of gold or silver, that flashes only in the sun, with multitudes to applaud. Thus it was that one of those Herods stood forth in the theater of

Cæsarea, like a god to look at, but smitten at his vitals with a loathsome malady. To Jesus, the glory of a person is not put on, but revealed. When He was transfigured, it was not His robe that in itself glistened —no fuller on earth could have so illuminated it. What shone was the Man within the vestment. The face of Moses, when he saw the skirts of God, was radiant by reflection; but when Jesus prayed to His Father, His countenance glowed not with the Divinity above it, but with the Divinity behind it. Here was the difference between the outside Light that lighteth every man, and the inner Light that is God's special gift. He did not need, like Herod, a sun to shine on Him. He *was* the Sun, shining amid that darkness. He was the Light of the world—the Light which kindles every light that truly shines among men.

Nor did His glory depend on the applause of a great audience. On no fewer than three occasions, He disclosed what was meant by His combat with Death. One each of these occasions, He limited the eye-witnesses of His power to three men only, Peter and James and John. They alone were with Him when He raised the daughter of Jairus. They alone were with Him when He talked with Moses and Elijah of His approaching decease. They alone were with Him when He underwent His agony in the Garden. He showed them, first, that death can be conquered. He showed them, next, that the greatest of men—men of law and men of prophecy, men who live the eternal life—desire the conquest of death. He showed them, finally, that the conquest of death is God's will also. Yet they did not understand it. When the little girl was given back to her parents, the three disciples were doubtless astonished. But on the Mountain they slept,

and in the Garden their slumber was so sound that thrice He endeavored to awake them.

A Missed Opportunity.

The bitterest of His sorrows at that period was the sense that His own friends—having been shown so much—did not understand Him. In the end, He won the allegiance of His brothers, but for years they refused belief. Peter and James and John loved Him dearly. Night or day, they were ready to follow Him. They and the other disciples were struck with grief when He talked of going up to Jerusalem to die, and said that they also would go up to die with Him. Immediately before His arrest Peter repeated the assurance, and quite sincerely; undoubtedly he meant it. But when it came to the point, he with the others forsook Him and fled; and when Peter returned to His presence in the judgment-hall, it was only to deny Him thrice. There came a time when all these Apostles were proud and glad to suffer with Christ, to be crucified with Him, and share the glory that has radiance amid shame. But when, in the flesh, He gave them the opportunity, telling them that by losing life they would find it, they missed their chance. It was alone that He trod the wine-press whence flows our happiness. It was no apostle, but a thief, that accompanied Him to paradise, and to save that thief *He died first.* There was a sense in which His bodily presence did not win His disciples, and, studying their failure, we understand what He meant when He said that it was *expedient*—note that word, a very strong one—that He should go away; *expedient,* because then there would come to them the Spirit—the Comforter—to make them all that He desired them to be.

Frequently we can detect symptoms of what pain He suffered through "His own." There was Peter persuading Him to surrender Jerusalem without a struggle; as if there could be one spot in earth or heaven where the writ of the King of kings does not run! There was Peter again—himself a slumberer—seeking to limit His revelation on the Mount to himself and his friends—to shut the Christ up in a tabernacle, as the Devil would have set Him on a pinnacle—making of Him no more than another Moses and another Elijah, and testing every circumstance of religion, not by the question, What is a saving faith for the world? but by the question, What is good and comfortable and blessed for the believer? There were James and John, begging like the Pharisees for chief places in the kingdom; and the other disciples, led away by the example of the more favored of their number, constantly quarreled as to who should be greatest. As He met the parents of the epileptic boy whom they could not help, what hurt Him so terribly was the evidence that they were utterly unable to carry on His work. And to this disappointment was added later the haunting fear that, sifted by Satan like wheat, their personal faith might fail. He prayed for Peter, He prayed for them all, as no mother has ever prayed, even for her only son. And His prayers availed. They were not assisted by those of the Virgin Mary, nor by the intercession of patriarchs. His intercessions were themselves complete.

The uttermost misery of that time was the treachery of Judas Iscariot. Of the other disciples, we know that one was a fisherman, another was a Zealot, another a civil servant, and so on. Judas was simply a man. He was a well-chosen man, like the other Apostles.

Born and bred in a village, his character was excellent; he was vigorous, and, to all appearances, he faithfully fulfilled his duty. Obviously, there had to be somebody able and willing to handle the finances of the little mission. It was so in the Early Church. There was nothing dishonorable in the duty which Jesus laid upon Judas. And if Judas undertook it, this showed that Jesus was never under the necessity of distributing alms—that it was not money which uplifted the fallen.

The Seen and the Unseen.

John tells us bluntly that the Iscariot was guilty of embezzlement. That is a gross and terrible sin, but it begins with an error which is quite common in all classes of society. Judas simply regarded God's money as if it were his own; he carried the bag, and *kept* what was put therein. One is amazed by the little that he got out of it. When he was about to take his life, what he threw down in the Temple was neither more nor less than thirty pieces of silver, the amount of his bribe; nor is there one tittle of evidence that he ever enriched himself beyond that sum. There is no suggestion that this man spent a farthing on himself; his was not the sin of Ananias and Sapphira, who kept back part of the price. The trouble with him was essentially that his faith depended on endowments; that he relied on the seen and loved the seen, instead of the unseen—because he felt that the seen belonged to him, whereas the unseen claimed him. He wanted the power of money, because that power seemed to make him independent of the Saviour. He would do good himself, instead of revealing the good in Christ. He began by denying that adoration of the Saviour is

worth three hundred pence. He ended by valuing the Saviour's life at thirty pieces of silver.

And Jesus, whose friendship was exquisitely sensitive, did not once ask him for a single mite. When he wanted a penny to illustrate His teaching, it was not Judas who brought it. When He had need of a stater with which to pay a tax, it was to Peter, not to Judas, that He turned; and He preferred the fish's mouth to that purse with its strings so tightly drawn. He was not one who went for money to those who had it. He only loved the "cheerful giver." The estrangement between Him and Judas was unseen by others. No one objected to Judas sitting with Him at the Last Supper. When Judas went out, they only thought that he had business to transact—to buy something, to give something—as if any business could have taken precedence over communion with the Lord. The business, alas, was not buying, not giving. It was selling; and he who would have sold our Redeemer's alabaster box was now ready to sell the Saviour Himself.

XXXIII

HIS ROYAL ENTRY

Joshua and Jesus—An Ass with a Colt—The Triumphant Christ—"His Last Few Nights."

I HAVE written in vain if I have not shown that the events of our Saviour's life on earth and of His death—it may be true, also, of our meaner lives—were symbols of greater things beyond. His last journey, from Galilee to Jerusalem, was not direct by way of Samaria, through which He passed three years earlier on His way from Jerusalem to Galilee. He walked beyond Jordan eastward, and so approached the city where He was to die by way of Joshua's ford over the river; and passing through the city of Jericho, on which Joshua laid a curse, He ascended by that very road where lay the certain man who, in the parable, was assisted by the Good Samaritan.

At Jacob's well He would have united the schisms of Israel—the two tribes against the ten tribes, by merging all the denominations in one spiritual and truthful worship of the one Father. But in Decapolis and the regions beyond Jordan, He ministered unto those two and a half tribes, who had preferred an immediate and material blessing to the Promised Land beyond the river—the people who are too in-

different to be unorthodox, who merely lapse from religion; who have no remedy for a man possessed by a devil, except to chain him, and leave him in the tombs, in the restraint of the prison, the madhouse, the casual ward. That was the region where they valued swine more highly than souls—the swine typifying the illicit wealth which God's law condemns. When they lost their swine, they did not seek to stone Jesus or crucify Him; they merely besought Him to leave their coats. They excluded Him from their community—it was most politely done—and from that day to this, their country has not counted in the history of mankind. Grievous as were the sins of Jerusalem, it was in Jerusalem, the place of faith and of worship, that man's salvation was to be won. It was in Jerusalem, as He expressed it in terrible irony, that the Prophet of prophets needs must die. On our battlefields, in our music-halls, in our theaters, He may be *neglected,* but it is in our churches and chapels that He is *crucified* afresh to-day.

Joshua and Jesus.

Jesus and Joshua were namesakes: they are two forms of one word, and the meaning is "Jehovah is Saviour." Joshua set himself to save the people by conquest, by statesmanship, by the arm of flesh. It was God's will that this method should be tried, and Nature was bidden to assist. Jordan, in flood, afforded a dry passage for the invaders. The walls of the city fell down at the blast of the trumpet. The lot fell unerring upon Achan—the Judas Iscariot of the Old Testament—the man to whom war resolves itself into hidden profits. But the last progress of Jesus was marked by no such miracles. He, like the rest, had to

wade through Jordan. What He destroyed was not the walls of Jericho, but the walls of prejudice which ostracized Zacchæus, and the walls of darkness that enclosed blind Bartimæus. And it was no lot or dice that detected Judas, but His all-seeing eye. Our Saviour, unlike Joshua, did not need to be told—He *knew* who should betray Him. And the traitor did not need to be stoned. Craving no further mercy than he had received by Christ's companionship, he went out and hanged himself. It is the only case of suicide in the Gospels, and it has destroyed for ever the glamour of *hari-kiri,* as practiced in Japan, or that death of Socrates which the Stoics admired and imitated. By enduring to the end, our Saviour answered the question, to all who ask it, Is life worth living? In Him, all life becomes worth while.

On the Mount of Olives—that place from which the scene is surveyed in perspective, as God surveys it—where one sees life whole, instead of piecemeal, He paused, the multitudes around Him. There, across the valley, rose the Temple, girt about with the dwellings of men, the houses of the home-dwellers, the tents and tabernacles of the ingathered colonists. The mother country and her dominions beyond the sea were to keep Passover together, and to all alike He offered Himself. On other occasions He had attended the feast privately, worshiping without advertisement Him who seeth in secret; to-day, His entry must be in state. Men must realize, not His love only, not His power only—these they had seen in His wonderful works—but His claim. They must be brought to the point of deciding whether they will grant allegiance to Him, or refuse it.

As His heralds, He sent into the city two disciples.

His instructions to them were precise, but, within those orders, they were plenipotentiaries. To Herod the king, to Pilate the general, to Annas and Caiaphas the prelates, they were to make no appeal. The world was to learn once for all that the Redeemer has no need of patronage by the State, of protection by the Army, or of authorization by the Church. Any man who obeys, is all that He wants. It was to "any man" that He dispatched His embassy. It was an embassy illustrious only because He made it so.

An Ass with a Colt.

They were to find a place where two ways met—a place of choice, of controversy, of decision. At that place, political parties might encounter one another and contend; legions and battalions might engage in bloody conflict; sects might plunge into dialectics; rival processions might flaunt diverse flags. There the disciples would find an ass, with a colt tied. Over the ownership of those animals there might be doubt and controversy. All He said was that He had need of them. Above all treaties and title-deeds and opinions rose unchallengeable His supreme claim. He wants us, not for service only, though in Him we do serve. He wants us for Himself—to be "Christophers"—to be Christ-bearers. The two ways meet, but we take neither, for the third way is His.

The ass and the colt were to be set at liberty. Among those who obey Him, there may be inexperience and stupidity, but there must be freedom. If we ask why His followers have struggled against despotism—why they have in every country "loosed the colt"—why they have liberated slave and serf and peasant—the answer is not that they institute license

or abolish duty; the only liberty they should ever desire is the liberty to work with Him—the full right to do His good. Read the annals of reformation and martyrdom, and you will find that what brought His witnesses into conflict with authority was always their determination, not to acquire possessions or privilege, but to carry out His wishes. The colt, the foal of an ass, on which He rode, was one on which man had never sat. It was a simple, untrained beast, but it had this particular virtue—no one had drilled it into unreasoning acceptance of the conventions. Without that drill, no ordinary man could have ridden the colt. But the guidance of His hand, with its touch of utter understanding, was at once supreme.

The Triumphant Christ.

To His commandeering no exception was taken. While the great ones of the earth were plotting against Him, this nameless owner of asses was ready, without fee or reward, to give whatever was required. He did not question our Lord's authority, as did the Sanhedrin an hour or two later; and he therefore takes his place, though nameless—for there was no subscription list—among the few, the very few, who freely helped our Lord. To this considerable extent let us honor him. He was a man who would have presented a lectern to his parish church for the glory of God, without adding, "and in memory of So-and-so." His daughter would have tended the wounded, quite unphotographed.

But to this I must add a word. He who in silence assists a nobly-winning cause does well, but there follows a severer test. Multitudes were ready to strew their garments in the way of the triumphant

Christ, to sing hymns in His praise, to wave palm branches where He rode—to act as we do where a mission is successful, where a congregation is large, where the preacher is popular and the music attractive. But when He walks alone and in disgrace, such shallow and momentary devotion, however loyal, however anonymous, often fades away. There comes inevitably a time when He calls for those who will faithfully confess Him even when He seems to have failed. This man, who lent his animals so willingly when things went well, was among those who, in calamity, forsook Him and fled.

Not that our Lord's life, even at that perilous hour, looked like "the failure" which suddenly overwhelmed His followers. Here were men, women, and children who, in His presence, could spontaneously sing His birthday anthem—"Hosanna, Glory to God in the Highest; among men, peace and goodwill." They had really caught the first syllables of the Gospel—and the song of heaven became through them the song of earth. Simple as was their homage, He accepted it. He would not have these enthusiastic salvationists rebuked. Forbid them, said He, and the stones will cry out. And this actually happened. The Jews were forbidden thus to praise Him, and it is the Gentiles who now extol the Messiah.

Would that their service had been as willing as their praise! Ready enough to worship, they would not help Him to cleanse the Temple. There and then they would have crowned Him; but to turn out the money-changers—no, they would not lift a finger. Yet it was just the work that was suited to their enthusiastic mood. It needed His zeal to accomplish it—the zeal that was consuming Him—

and it would have consecrated their zeal. Unlike healing the sick and cleansing the lepers, it required no special grace. It was the kind of reform that right-minded politicians constantly undertake and carry through. His retinue merely looked on. He left the city that evening without a cheer. Passing a fig-tree, He sought fruit on it, but found nothing but leaves. At His word, the tree withered in a night—so demonstrating that all things are judged in the end by their usefulness to Him. And we have that unforgettable picture of Him, looking on the city, with its Temple and walls and pinnacles, and weeping over the place. For His was no cold and remorseless system of creeds. He shared our patriotism. Not one of us has loved his country so loyally as He loved Judea. Nor did He once give way to the bitterness of justified resentment. Whatever hard things He said, were the faithful wounds of a Friend.

"His Last Few Nights."

With crisis impending, there is a strange irony in the arguments that were forced upon Him by men who should have fallen on their knees and craved His pardon for their sins. The ethics of taxation, the basis of divorce, the nature of life after death—He dealt with them all, and His judgments on these matters are immortal. But we realize what a contrast there is between these wrangles, so wickedly provoked, and His message at a previous feast: "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink." Even His sermons or discourses were limited, as it were, by the heart-readiness of those who listened, and the time was near at hand when He would be reduced to absolute silence.

The main body of His final teaching was committed to a very few, not at Jerusalem, but at Bethany, where He spent His evenings and slept His last nights. It was a village without history, without architecture, without social or strategic importance—the kind of hamlet that disappears under the hammering of artillery—but although nobody prophesied about Bethany, and nobody goes there on pilgrimage, it has this distinction—there alone did Jesus feel at ease. Bethlehem and Nazareth and Jerusalem all rejected Him; in Bethany, He could speak or remain silent, as He wished; He was never weary, without resting; He was never hungry, without receiving meat. There, in Bethany, one really sees what He meant by God's kingdom coming upon earth.

XXXIV

BETHANY! FAREWELL

The Alabaster Box—"At the Table with Him."

THE last six days of our Lord's life on earth were what the Jews called the Passover, and what we now call Holy Week. He spent those days arduously in Jerusalem, but at night, as we have seen, He walked to Bethany, a distance of two miles, and there slept. It was a hurried and complex existence, not unlike the lives of those millions who, in our own times, go forth in the morning on foot or by train or tram to earn their bread, returning home weary at night. Amid that stress and strain, He did not once lose touch with faith and prayer and Scripture.

That little village of Bethany is not mentioned in the Old Testament. It has not interested either the prophet or the historian, nor does it attract the pilgrim. It was no temple nor synagogue that drew Him thither, but a family of two sisters and a brother, who made Him welcome, and with whom He felt at home. Martha and Mary and Lazarus were not among the apostles and martyrs. They did not rank as clergy, ministers, missionaries, monks, or nuns. They did not at that time give up houses and lands and business for His sake. But, of their substance and their

thought, they provided for Him somewhere to lay His head. In loving them, with a natural brotherly affection, He added His sanction to all noble friendship and kindly hospitality. Bethany offered to Him everything that is possible on earth—of boundless devotion and intimate understanding. He was invited into the family. If He had turned aside from saving us, He might have spent there a long, happy, and valuable life. We talk much of what it cost Him to leave His Home on high; let us not forget also the wrench which parted Him at the last from Lazarus and his sisters.

Martha's ideal was service. She was an organizer. Her love expressed itself mainly through the material. In Mary of Bethany, we see woman not only as a housewife and worker at committees and sewing parties, but as a living soul. She found time to sit at our Lord's feet and listen. Listening, she believed Him. She realized, better than anyone else, that this was His farewell visit. She was like a sister bravely bidding good-by to a brother home for his last leave. She did not seek, like Peter, to hold the Saviour back. She accepted His word that He must die. And with a courage that will comfort many of her sisters to-day, she lavished her wealth upon Him freely, not reserving her spices for His burial, as we sometimes reserve our wreaths, but letting Him know while He was yet alive how much He was to her.

The Alabaster Box.

Some friends have kindly written to me about the incident of the alabaster box, and I think rightly. The subject is not free from difficulty, but it seems clear that our Lord was thus anointed, not once, but twice.

On the first occasion the woman was a sinner of "the city," possibly Capernaum, possibly Nain. The host was Simon, a Pharisee. The objection raised was not the value of the gift, but the character of the giver. On the second occasion, the host was Simon the Leper. The place was Bethany. The woman was Mary, whose sister Martha was serving. The objection raised was not Mary's character, which was stainless, but the waste of the ointment. Here is, I think, a clear differentiation, and I am not concerned to press the tradition, which is not confirmed by any direct statement, that the sinful woman was, in fact, Mary Magdalene. For a comparison of the two incidents is sufficiently wonderful without dramatic embellishment. Here was Mary of Bethany, in the beauty of her holiness, content to display the same repentance, the same adoration, as the most tempted, the most despised of her sex in the cruel world beyond her sheltered home. And here was Judas, grudging the Friend with whom he had been associated for years the gift which, in itself, did not arouse any criticism from Simon the Pharisee, a casual acquaintance.

Our Lord assured Mary that hers was the better part, which should not be taken away from her. At our meals, we think so much of the food, so little of the table talk; yet it is the talk which is eternal. The time was at hand when no one, not even Martha, would be able to minister to the bodily needs of the Saviour, but when none the less we all may sit at His feet and listen. It was trouble that tested the contrast between these sisters. When Lazarus fell ill, both of them sent for Jesus. When their brother died, in both their hearts there arose the thought—remarkable in its complete reliance on His power over disease—

that it would not have happened if He had been there. But Martha hurried forth to meet Him with her complaint. When He promised her that Lazarus should rise again, she argued; and by mentioning "the last day," limited His present power, acknowledging that He could heal the sick, but not believing that He could raise the dead.

Between Mary's conduct and our Lord's there was, on the other hand, an exquisite correspondence. He had waited two days where He was. She on her side sat still in the house, not going to Him till He called her; when—unlike Martha—she fell at His feet and uttered her sincere doubts only as part of her worship. To Martha, our Lord had to reveal Himself as the Christ of God, drawing from her that confession of faith. Mary's worship was spontaneous; and what troubled Him was her sorrow, not the obscurity of her belief. Faced by the dominion of death, with its dreadful accompaniment of tears, He groaned in spirit; He also wept. When David lost his friend Jonathan his grief was impotent, and for his son Absalom he would have died, but could not. David's greater Son, faced by the same situation, shared the sorrow, but stood forth in majesty as the Resurrection and the Life. In the person of His friend, He conquered death. The home at Bethany that He entered was simple, but none the less did He reign there, in omnipotent splendor, as Lord of this life and of the life to come.

"At the Table with Him."

Lazarus behaved with the discretion of a loyal humility. Owing his life to Jesus, he did not boast, or ask to be included with the Twelve—still less seek to be the greatest. We only read of him that he sat

at meat with Jesus, so enjoying the company of the Highest. But his mere presence was a difficulty to the Rabbis. Here, while these men sought to kill their Messiah, was this same Messiah raising His friend from the dead. It dawned upon the Sanhedrin that Christ is not crushed until all who believe in Him, to the very humblest, are slain. He does not work by the majority—His power and His Gospel are safe while one true disciple breathes on earth. They did not worry about those who had a passing knowledge of Him; the only disciple who counted in that crisis was the disciple who had tested His uttermost power. The Twelve, still of worldly mind and ambition, had not yet become formidable. But Lazarus, the harbinger of resurrection, must be slain, if possible, a second time.

For, as one reads the records of these days, one gains the impression that our Lord was not an Individual, leading a revolt against established authority. We feel that He was actually King; and that the rebellion was not His, but the Jews'. Of His Kingdom there was no end. In Lazarus, He was vanquisher of the tomb. In Simon the Leper, He conquered plague. The blind and the lame came to Him, and again He healed them. The fig-tree which failed in allegiance to Him withered. We sometimes think that His teaching was spread evenly over the three years of His ministry. But at least half of it, as recorded, was reserved for those three days of rule in Jerusalem. His output of mind and soul surpasses comprehension. He entered the city royally. He cleansed the Temple. He dealt with the fig-tree. He worked miracles. He poured forth parables—of the vineyard, the chief corner-stone, the marriage-feast, the virgins, the talents,

the sheep and goats. He mourned over Jerusalem; He prophesied her doom. He foreshadowed His Second Coming. He denounced the scribes and Pharisees. All their questions He answered. While He spoke of the faith that removes mountains, He did not forget the widow's mite. The world, wrote John, could not contain the books that might be written of what He said and did. Indeed, the heaven of heavens is not enough for His library. And when Pilate wrote over His cross that He was King of the Jews, it was the truth. For those few days nobody could resist Him. He had no army, no navy, no police, no palace; but He was, none the less, supreme. And supreme He remained until the end.

XXXV

THE PASSOVER OF THE JEWS

Lifted Up to Die—The Betrayal—Loved to the End.

IN these days, some read of the Mosaic ritual as if it were a dead language, far too hard for us to understand. Yet the Passover can never be for us mere history, for it was our Lord's last meal before He died, and on the great day of Atonement He lay in His grave. This feast is modern as well as ancient, because it is eternal. Originating in the Exodus, it has survived the turmoil of the Judges, the glories of Solomon, the Captivity, the Maccabean Wars, and even the final destruction of Jerusalem, and it is still observed by Jews—a race growing ever more numerous—wherever they dwell. In these ceremonial records there lurks the very secret of our salvation, and out of it sprang the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion.

Public worship, as celebrated at Jerusalem, was among the wonders of the world. The Apostles had to seek out the Gentiles, and win them, one by one; but in John xii. we read of Greeks gathering in the Temple of their own free will to worship at the Passover feast. It was a historic scene. The Passover was the festival which marked the beginning of months, the new life, the fresh start, the regeneration

of men's souls. Yet it was not to Annas and Caiaphas that the Greeks made their appeal. They knew well enough that from the Temple they were excluded. Some other victim than these inaccessible bulls and goats seemed to be needed, and the pagans turned to that Lamb—the Lamb of God—which was slain from the foundation of the world. Years before, at the Jordan, Andrew and Philip had been men who liked to talk about the Christ. They now met the Greeks, who said, "We would see Jesus," and Jesus was told about it. "Him that cometh unto Me," He had declared, "I will in no wise cast out." The Greeks filled Him with a sudden joy.

Lifted Up to Die.

In those men, our Lord saw the promise of world-evangelization. Here at last was the hour when He would be glorified—the streak of dawn amid the darkness. He might have left Jerusalem and turned, like Paul, there and then, to the Gentiles. With His healing wisdom, what a missionary He would have been! But He did not leave Jerusalem. We do not know that He actually met the Greeks. With a trouble of soul that He did not conceal, the corn of wheat, He said, must first fall into the ground and die (ver. 24). The life must first be lost—nay, hated. What He came for, was to endure the cross. Only as lifted thereon would He draw men unto Him. As Paul had to learn, there is no Christ to be preached except Christ crucified.

Some have compared the approach of these Greeks from the West with the approach of the Wise Men from the East. The Wise Men were offered the Cradle, where life is granted. The Greeks were offered

the Cross, where life is laid down. The trouble with the East has been a deficiency of life; there is oppression, lethargy, acquiescence. And the East receives the Babe. In the West, the trouble is not a deficiency of life, but a barbaric and undisciplined vigor. To the West is granted the Crucified One. To all of us, He thus comes as what we specially need. He corrects our despair with His Childhood; He tempers our confidence with His Sufferings.

Yet—as He turned from those Greeks to die—He was tried by misgivings. What if—by His death—God should be obscured? He did not dally with doubt or hesitate. He killed it with a prayer at once, instant and audible. "Father," He cried, "glorify Thy name"—do not let that be disgraced by the Cross. The people heard what they took to be thunder. Little as they realized it, here was thunder which still reverberates round the world, never louder than to-day—the roar of artillery, the crash of empires, the ruin of thrones. Some vaguely discerned a voice amid the noise—an angel's voice, louder than man's; but what Christ heard was the speaking of God. "I have glorified it," said the Father, "and will glorify it again."

There was a reason why the priests did not care to explain the Passover to the Gentiles. It was a humbling ordinance, that reminded the proudest of his sin. The Israelites were saved from the destroying angel, not because they were better than the Egyptians, but because a little lamb, only a year old, was slain. However fine the house, the angel only passed over it when the blood of this lamb was sprinkled on the lintel and sideposts of the door. They who would be safe had to enter by that shed blood, as a Roman soldier, when conquered, had to pass under the yoke. The

sprinkling must be by hyssop, a mere weed in the wall, in itself worthless—showing that here is a matter where money and art and intellect are of no avail—all of us have equally come short, all must be saved freely, or not at all. The will alone counted—did they or did they not take the hyssop, equally available for rich and poor, and obey the command? And salvation was not an ecclesiastical but a domestic, a *personal* event. It was a deliverance of the home. It was from the home that leaven—the leaven of unrighteousness—had to be scrupulously removed. The outward confession on the "doorpost and lintel" must correspond with inward amendment in cupboard and kitchen! Moreover, the lamb thus slain for atonement remained in the home for sustenance. But they must eat it, not with the luxury of leeks and garlics and onions, but with the bitter herbs of a sincere sorrow for sin, and with loins girded, shoes on the feet, staff in hand, as for a long journey eastwards to a better country, where lies the dawn. To obtain strength for that pilgrimage, each must partake for himself. None must rely on his own resources—else would he fall by the way.

If these had been the thoughts of the Jews, they also, like the Greeks, would have desired to see the Saviour. But their minds, not being repentant, could not teach repentance to others. They were otherwise occupied. Nicodemus, having made his protest in the Sanhedrin, was now silenced; and despite the influence of Joseph of Arimathea, there was no open dissent from a resolution definitely condemning Christ to death. Even at that eleventh hour, our Lord did not leave these men unwarned of the consequences. He told them that after His death

nation would rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom; that wars and rumors of wars would curse the world; until, amid the clouds of fire and smoke, the Son of Man would return to reign in power and great glory. But His voice was not heeded. The Sanhedrin was composed of statesmen. What engrossed their minds was, not the eternal judgment of God, but a possible uproar among the people, the day after to-morrow. When Galileans became unruly in the Temple, Pontius Pilate had a habit of making short work of them. Therefore, said these opportunists, we must indeed kill Christ, only we must do it quietly, not on the feast day, but by *lettre de cachet*. He must simply disappear, the crowds must lose sight of Him and forget Him. It was the old delusion, that because men can do wrong, therefore they are able by ingenuity to avoid results.

The Betrayal.

It meant that if nothing was done before the feast-day, the crisis would blow over until the following week, perhaps for a longer period, as had happened more than once. This, then, was the moment when Judas proceeded straight from the supper in Simon's house and obtained an interview with the chief priests. They were glad to see him. It was indeed a providential coincidence that one of the Nazerene's disciples should be open to bribery. They made their terms with Judas: it was to be payment by results; thirty pieces of silver if and when Jesus should be given into their hands. And thus it was, in mysticism quite unconscious, that they bought for money—the sacred money of the Temple—the One True Paschal Lamb, who would take away the sin of the world.

John tells us that Judas was a thief; and, taking his words in their plain sense, we learn that dishonesty of every kind is not an offense against property only —that is the least aspect of it; it may be a betrayal of the Redeemer. Far happier was the convicted thief on the cross, who sinned, not knowing Him, than the thief who sold his Friend. And here let me make a remark which brings this narrative to bear on our actual customs and habits. Without dreaming of the Iscariot's danger, the Apostles left him in sole charge of funds for which all were responsible. They were like people who leave money about where there are untrustworthy servants. They did not repeat the mistake. Although before He died, Jesus gave them leave to carry purses and swords, yet, endowed with the Spirit, they of the Early Church did not appoint one deacon only as trustee, but seven. In money matters they became as careful as any experienced man of business, to avoid needless temptation. There was no second Judas, dishonest but undiscovered. The detection of Ananias and Sapphira was instant and conclusive.

Loved to the End.

To the end, Jesus held out His hand to save the Iscariot. He admitted Judas to the innermost friendship of Bethany. He made him welcome at the Last Supper. And, knowing from the first that the man was a traitor, He framed His warnings with a tender tact that appealed to the guilty apostle, without repelling him. Many months before the catastrophe, He remarked, in general terms, that there were some, even of His intimate friends, who did not believe. While He was still in Galilee, He

said, still in general terms, that He would be betrayed. On the final evening, when He washed the disciples' feet, He added, as if casually: "Ye are clean—but not all."

A few minutes later—when Judas still held out—He astounded them with the terrible declaration: "Verily, one of *you* shall betray Me." The words were unmistakable, but how careful was our Lord not to disgrace the Iscariot! The Apostles accused themselves, not him; and even when Judas had taken the sop, they did not guess the truth. That sop was the last token of a love unto death. How *could* Judas play Him false after that? They two had dipped their hands in the same dish. "Good were it," added the Saviour—and we feel the emphasis of it—"for that man if he had never been born." Even then, two men only beside Judas—that is Peter and John—realized the tragedy. And they were speechless. For Judas, looking Jesus in the face, asked calmly: "Master, is it I?" to which the answer was: "Thou hast said." Judas pronounced his own doom.

His appalling courage was Satanic. He rose to go, with so cool an assurance that most of those present assumed that he was to buy something for the feast, or give alms to the poor. "What thou doest, do quickly," said our Lord; and as the unhappy man opened the door, they noticed—these little details live in the memory—that time had passed since they entered the upper room; *it was night.* "What thou doest," said He, "do quickly." He, like the priests, desired that all should be "finished" before the dawn of the great day of Atonement.

With Judas there, He was oppressed and troubled. With him gone, He seemed to heave a sigh of relief.

"Now," cried He, "is the Son of Man glorified." And it is an astonishing illustration of this scene that to this day millions of educated people will not sit thirteen at a table lest there be hidden treachery or some other trouble in store for them. It is the truth coming to us through the distorted medium of ignorance and superstition.

XXXVI

THE CLOSING HYMN

The Upper Room—The Elements—The Water of Cleansing—The Eleven.

AND now in all reverence and gratitude let us consider what really happened at this last supper of our Blessed Lord. It was not with His friends at Bethany that He spent this final evening, but with "the Twelve" whom He had chosen, one of whom, as He had said, was a devil. Some of them might be rough of speech; others addicted to jealousy; others, again, unwatchful against temptation; and all equally disinclined to serve one another in menial duties. But He had chosen them, and claimed their company. The question with Him was not what they were, but what He could make of them.

As one thinks how communion with Him has been obscured by priestly pretensions and ecclesiastical rivalries—churches contending with one another, as did "the Twelve," which shall be the greatest—one feels how, through all the centuries, His table, where Judas sat, has been spread in the presence of enemies. What He meant was so simple. He asked two of the disciples to prepare for Him the Passover. On entering Jerusalem, they would meet, not a Rabbi

or a Levite, but just an ordinary man, to all appearance, going about his work—or what the Psalmist would call his " way "—with a pitcher on his shoulder, in which vessel, perhaps, was the very water that our Lord would need to pour over the disciples' feet. Here, again, was a nameless follower of the Master, who said nothing about religion, but was quite ready, when asked, to lend his upper room. There are such men all around us, if only we can show them what it is that Christ needs from them. It was Christ's plan to take common duties and transform them into God's service.

The Upper Room.

What He required was that upper room. He showed that His Communion does not depend on a consecrated building, or altar, or chancel. The room was already furnished, and the furniture was entirely of the home. It had been used and would be used again for domestic purposes. It was around such a table that they sat, or, in Eastern fashion, reclined. Between Him and them there was no rood-screen or other dividing barrier. The beloved disciple lay on His bosom, and could catch His lightest whisper. We do not read of candles or incense or vestments, for He Himself was clearly seen and clearly heard, and this was enough. There was indeed a genuflection, but it was He who knelt in Divine humility at the feet of His friends. But the circumstances of that solemn meal—the dish whence was drawn the sop, and the hour when the supper took place—should warn us against the habit of laying emphasis on the material side of these deep happenings. There is no suggestion of a fasting Communion, and the service was held, not in the morning, but at night.

We should notice, moreover, that both here and after He had risen Jesus was present with His disciples before any blessing was pronounced on bread and wine. It was no word—no formula, however sacred—that drew Him to His own. He was among them first, and it was because this was so that He could give His blessing. The occasion was not ecclesiastical, but, in a sense, universal for those who love Him. It was so painted by Leonardo da Vinci, who shows us the disciples, not in worship, but in conversation—rather unedifying until He took part, when gradually other voices were hushed, and perhaps His alone was heard. When we say grace at meals, we invite Him to grant us His real presence; and there is, I am told, at Alnwick Castle a chair always left vacant for Him to occupy when He comes again.

The Elements.

Now, as then, His are always the abundant blessings. His Spirit is like wind and flame. His is the water of life, flowing freely as a river. And so He took bread, the commonest of foods, with wine, which was then the universal drink, to hallow both. In the material sense there was no miracle. He did not multiply the bread. He meant the water in the waterpot for other purposes than a change into wine, as at Cana. His aim was no longer to satisfy physical hunger—to lavish yet more loaves and fishes; but to show us that a mere morsel, when we take it from His hand, a mere drop or two that He has blessed, are more precious than all the luxuries that wealth can procure. And amid the ceremonial that now surrounds His ordinance, we may, at least, say this—however many jewels there may be on the paten and chalice,

bread remains simple bread, wine remains wine. No prelate, no theologian, has been able to alter those "elements"—note the word, for it brings us back to our position as His "children"—which are of His will. The "elementary" love is what we need.

As His body was to be broken, so broke He the bread. As His blood was to be shed, so poured He forth the wine. He wished it to be clear that He died willingly because He died for us. He would have us thus show forth His death till He comes again, so that what moved Him to endure the cross may never be in doubt. "This do," said He, "in remembrance of Me"—not as a test of orthodoxy, not as a sacrifice for sin, not as expiation for the dead, not as a preparation for judgment—do it only as "remembrance." He who had called on them to follow Him, to do mighty works in His Name, to give up family and lands for His sake, asked now for no more than a place in their recollection. And even this has been denied by many of us to the Christ we forget. They were *all* to drink of that cup, so great was their individual responsibility, and He drank first—at least, I am so persuaded—though it meant for Him what Gethsemane revealed.

The Water of Cleansing.

Nor was there an elaborate order of service. He and He alone directed the proceedings, and no one knew what He meant to do when He rose from the table and quietly disrobed, girding Himself afterwards with a towel. It seemed as if He wished to make it plain that when violent men afterwards robbed Him of His garments, they took nothing from Him which He had not freely given up. And when He poured out

the water, so soon to be followed by wine, He seemed to foreshadow that flow from the very heart, water and blood—the human and the Divine—of which John was to bear witness. These also were His free gifts. And not a drop, even of the water, was wasted. Within the circumference of that basin, as of His providence, His whole effort, as Man ministering to man, was preserved for the cleansing of all who will submit themselves to Him.

Their silence, as He passed from one to another, was profound. It was as if they dared not speak. With one exception, His rebuke left them broken and contrite. For they had seen how His own feet had been washed by Mary of Bethany; and here was He, unwilling to receive any comfort which He did not share with them. They had heard his rebuke to Simon the Pharisee, when he forgot this simple courtesy; yet, as the waterpot, basin, and towel reminded them, they also had been remiss. The exquisite pain of His reproof—keen but inevitable—drove one of the disciples into vindictive though unspoken hatred, and another into vigorous protest. "Thou shalt never wash my feet," cried Peter, in utter anguish. His quiet reply meant that they who will not receive His lessons can have no part in Him. "Not my feet, but my whole body," begged Peter. But again He would not be persuaded. Cleansing must be according to His will, not according to our ideas or emotions. Peter's knowledge was imperfect; in courage he was to fail; but he was not all bad, and the Saviour from sin never exaggerated human depravity. He did not heal a leper as if the man also suffered from fever and paralysis. Conversion is a real change that does not need to be repeated. If Peter's feet were washed, he would be

clean every whit. Confronted by His humiliation and the cause of it, the Apostles never again renewed their rivalries. Among those first bishops, there was no Pope.

The Eleven.

For as He talked with them far into the evening—while the Iscariot was busy with his preparations—the burden on His heart was just those eleven remaining men. He knew that, in a few hours, all of them would be offended in Him. He was so conscious of devilry triumphant in the hour of darkness—only an hour, mind you—that He spoke of Peter being sifted like wheat, and prayed God to sustain him. Torn to the heart as He was with the unspeakable malice of Judas, we see Him wrestling with an awful mistrust, not of God, but of men, whose nature He had taken. Here, in this seething ocean of godlessness, were these few frail survivors of His cause; with passionate intensity He pleaded with His Father to keep them—not to lose one of them, not one! He spoke to them, as the evening wore on, of His love, of their union with Him, of a future to be spent with Himself. He could not have said more than He did; yearning for comfort and needing it, He comforted others.

At last they rose to their feet, and together they sang what was, in fact, His funeral hymn. His voice blended with theirs as He blessed the music that would be never-ending in the Home which He went forth to prepare. Verse by verse they sang, and this also came to an end. There lay the table—littered with the remnants of that long evening's feast. There stood the basin, pitcher, and towel beside them.

He added something about being delivered into the

hands of men. They knew that He was in deadly danger. Into the midnight they plunged, leaving behind them the city; they made for Bethany, as usual; but at a garden He stopped. His was to be no flight from peril. Nor would He bring the home of Lazarus, and Lazarus himself, into that dreadful drama which began with a kiss. He awaited His enemies where He alone would feel their blows. His only refuge was Gethsemane.

XXXVII

BETRAYED—ARRESTED—DENIED

Spirit willing: Flesh weak—"Whom seek ye?"—"It was Expedient that One die"—Peter's Denial.

WHEN we wait in suspense, fearing every moment that death may claim his own, then perhaps we understand something of the agony which, in Gethsemane, drew great drops, as of blood, from our Saviour's face. But in measure only, for He was bearing griefs not His own, and carrying the sorrows of mankind. He who had shed tears, and would soon shed His blood, so completely shared our nature that from His brow, as from ours, anguish wrung forth the moisture—what the Bible with utter candor calls the *sweat*—of intense pain. In the mountains that encircle Jerusalem, He might have found safety, but the garden had been His place for prayer—John tells us that—and with Him prayer was no casual impulse, but an appointment not to be set aside under any pressure of circumstances. Gethsemane was His Eden—the Paradise on earth which, as a Son of Adam, He must reconquer for His brethren; and if He had surrendered the Garden, returning to the desert, all good gifts that grow by knowledge of God would have been lost

to us for ever. Judas, who betrayed Him, knew absolutely where He would be found.

His disciples were now only eleven in number. Three of them had seen Him raise the dead and talk with the departed. Of these, James and John wished to share His throne, and were ready, so they declared, to drink of His cup. Peter, on his side, had promised vehemently that he would die with Him. These three men were, like Him, severely stricken with sorrow. But while sorrow with Him was unto death—since it was for sin—theirs, which was for pain and suffering, ended easily in sleep. He only asked them to watch with Him one hour. As we have seen, it was His fixed belief that, while the Kingdom of God is everlasting, the reign of evil must—compared with eternity—quickly pass away. But, despite His appeals, thus limited in time, they failed as sentinels. Even of His personal safety they were careless; for without warning from them His enemies surrounded Him. Having so lately received His sacrament of remembrance, they thus forgot Him; and as He trod the winepress alone, it was not they, but an angel, that strengthened Him.

Spirit willing: Flesh weak.

In the wilderness He had fought three times a solitary fight, and had no friends near Him. Here also was a conflict, thrice renewed, only it was more desperate; the prize was no longer a career, but life itself; and, as if He invited reinforcements, He thrice asked the Apostles to pray with Him. But we should notice that He withdrew from them a stone's-throw. Prayer to our Father is certainly fellowship—that is true—but it is also personal. We must enter our room, shut the

door, and face our special, individual responsibility. He had taught the disciples, like children, to use in prayer His words. But, in doing this, He warned them against vain repetitions, and He now wished that they should frame their own devotions. The Spirit, said He, was willing to help them, but the flesh was weak—not, be it noted, wicked, in this case, or unclean; but unreliable, shrinking, yielding—in a word, *weak*. A thorn could tear it; a scourge could wound it; a nail could pierce it; a spear could cleave it. And prayer requires courage, perseverance, concentration. For Him to win, as God, without the burden of our nature, would have been simple. The value of His victory to us is that He won it as Man; and the failure of His chief Apostles shows that only God in Man could have won it. Indeed, even this victory, in His own human Person, did not content Him. Peter, having thrice failed in watchfulness, failed thrice in witness—it was cause and effect, scientifically inexorable; yet it was through Peter, and men like him, that our Saviour has triumphed in history. This is the miracle—His use of *others*—which challenges explanation.

As He prayed, slowly but surely the tide of battle turned. The Satanic idea that the cup might pass from Him was surrendered, but with infinite sacrifice. He bowed His head to the ground—He could go no lower—as He accepted the Father's will, making it His own. And when a few minutes later Peter would have rescued Him by force, so complete was His mastery in Himself that He asked, without a trace of agitation—indeed, as if in surprise: "The cup that My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" John, who tells us this, is silent about the previous wrestlings. He

describes the conquest, but leaves the campaign to be inferred.

Gethsemane profoundly influenced the Apostles. Peter never wearied of writing about our Saviour's sufferings as a trial or test of faith; and Mark gives us one touch of exquisite intimacy when he says that Jesus addressed His Father as "Abba"—the Aramaic word—as when He said "Talitha Cumi" or "Ephphatha." In His weakness as in His power He fell back, not on the language of scholars and poets, but on His mother-tongue—the common speech of ordinary men and women. Mark seems to have had it from Peter, an eye-witness, and he handed it on to Paul; so that in the great chapter, the eighth of Romans, we are told that if we are led by the Spirit—the *willing* Spirit—the Spirit of adoption—we also may cry, "Abba, Father," as He did. And we detect, too, His Divine irony when He said: "Watch and pray, lest *ye* enter into temptation." It was as if He argued: "If *I* need to watch and pray, and invite you to watch and pray with Me, do you think that *you* can neglect such precautions?"

"Whom seek ye?"

A great multitude came to take Him. It was the majority, determined to rule; the big battalions, with swords and staves, confident that God must be on their side. The Wise Men were guided by a star, beyond themselves, poised in its orbit by God; but these violent and foolish men bore with them their own illumination—the smoking torch of revolution, the more sheltered flame of the lantern, which suggests law, civilization, order—and they thought that with such flickering beams they could illuminate the Light

of the World. Deeming Him Man, they called for "Jesus of Nazareth"; but on seeing Him they fell to the earth—not forward, in reverence, but backward, in that terror which Paul says is *not* the Spirit of adoption. He was thus self-identified; and while John mentions Judas, he says nothing of the kiss—prearranged as the signal for our Lord's arrest. Here, at the very crisis of His fate, Jesus would have forestalled the Iscariot's crime. Arrest—yes; but at least let the treachery be omitted.

Some act of supreme irreverence was wanted to break His spell. The crowd, though misled, hesitated. Their motives were not evil enough, without stimulus, for what they had to do. Incarnate God could only be betrayed by Incarnate Devil. Judas—determined to persist—walked up boldly to Jesus, and with the words, "Hail, Master," kissed Him on the cheek. Twelve legions of angels witnessed the act, but kept silence. The hosts of heaven were content that Jesus should speak. Twice He offered to save Judas, for twice He put to Him a question that invited contrition. "Friend," He asked, "wherefore art thou come?" And again: "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" One look was to be enough to arouse Peter to repentant weeping. But Judas hugged the hatred which the reverent devotion of Mary had fomented. And hatred, from that hour, vanquished whatever of love there had been in the traitor's heart.

Yet about those questions there was a wonderful brotherliness, a tender humility. Our Lord greeted the Iscariot not as a Master addressing His disciple, but as a Friend speaking to friend—not as God rebuking man, but so speaking—in our phrase—as "Man to man." How slow was the Redeemer to admit evil,

and how ready to welcome confession! He desired no more from Judas than the loyalty which every one of us owes to his neighbor. It is true that the sin of Judas was predestined—indeed, prophesied; but our Lord, by His infinite patience, made it abundantly plain that Judas alone was responsible. For the mystery of evil, which ever perplexes us, lies just here—that there is in wickedness a destiny which appears to be inevitable, yet goes against the revealed will of an all-powerful and all-righteous God, and conflicts with the uttermost endeavors of the Lord Christ.

Jesus asked that they should let His disciples go, and it was an easy boon to grant, for He alone mattered. His friends had with them but two swords, one of which was used by Peter when he struck off the ear of Malchus. By the laws of war, Malchus deserved it. But our Lord's last act before they bound Him was to institute the Red Cross for foe as well as friend, and He told Peter to put his sword back into its sheath. Then, as now, many soldiers worshiped Him. But He made it clear that their power, great though it be and responsibly exercised, is different from and less than His. I sometimes wonder whether Peter's sword will ever remain quietly in its sheath until He is King *of* kings and Lord *of* lords.

They all forsook Him and fled. So great was the panic that one nameless young man, who happened to be there in his night array, when he was seized, left his garment in the soldiers' hands, and fled naked. Who he was we shall never know—Mark tells us of him; some conjecture that he was Mark himself. To us, he is the eternal type of those who, when there is a noise about religion, are attracted to Christ by mere curiosity, but when they see Him, realize nothing of

His sufferings, and hurry away again, worse than before, by the loss of their self-respect.

"It was Expedient that One die."

Peter followed the Lord afar off. And so did the other disciple, John, whom Jesus loved. John was a friend of the high priest, and he it is who tells us how Caiaphas prophesied that a *man*—some man—must die for the people, that bulls and goats were no longer a sufficient sacrifice. When Jesus was taken to the palace of the priests, John entered himself, and apparently remained through the trials; also, he secured admittance for Peter. The night was cold as well as dark. The garrison kindled a fire, and Peter sat by it, saying no word to mitigate the rough humors of those hardened soldiers. He was recognized as a disciple, not by his witness or by his behavior, but only by his face and accent. The women-servants were particularly zealous in pointing him out, and the friends of Malchus—curiously ungrateful to the Saviour, for miracles in themselves do not win men's hearts—were full of their grievance against Peter. Thrice he denied the Saviour. Afraid of their inquiries, he made his way uneasily to the door, but gave one last glance at the Prisoner, standing bound. The Lord then turned and looked upon Peter, and he forgot everything else.

Peter's Denial.

John did not deny Jesus, but he never taunted the first of Apostles with his fall. He and Peter were among the earliest to visit the empty tomb, and, in later times we read of them entering the Temple together. Paul had his controversies with Peter, but

he never mentioned the denial. On the contrary, he spoke always as chief of sinners. The forgiving of Peter by Jesus transcended all. On rising from the dead, the Master sent him a special summons to meet Him. And when they met by the lake, He, with exquisite reminder, kindled for Peter a fire of coals. Asking not to walk on the water dry-shod—as he had once asked—Peter plunged into the sea, and so found his way back to the Saviour, returning thus to his first love; for it was through water that he came to Christ in earlier days.

He who had fallen asleep three times, and three times failed, was now asked three times if really He loved the Redeemer. He was grieved—he had to endure grief; but, humble and penitent, he replied: "Thou knowest." In the Garden, the Shepherd was taken, the sheep were scattered. Peter was to be a good shepherd, who feeds the sheep, even the lambs, and is ready to give his life for them.

XXXVIII

HE IS TRIED AND CONDEMNED

Arrested—Suborned Witnesses—The Accusation before Pilate.

HERE, then, at the Passover, were priests and people, thus waiting for a Man to die for them. Their Scriptures taught that every sacrifice, to be effective, must be without blemish, since no one, however generous, can pay a debt for another, even to a human creditor, when he himself is a bankrupt. If, then, this unknown Man, standing in the palace of the high priest, was to die for the people, He must be *innocent,* and innocence means a being perfect in love, as God is perfect, who is Love. To condemn such a Victim must be a miscarriage of justice. Their own ceremonies foreshadowed it. His Divinity was proved by the Book of Leviticus. It was true, as they told Pilate, that by their law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God. It was astoundingly true.

When wrong is done, we like to say that the system is to blame. It salves our consciences. But not one word was uttered by Jesus against the laws of Rome and Jewry, under which He was tried. On the contrary, the law of Rome, fairly administered, would have secured His acquittal. No conviction

was possible without evidence on which two witnesses must agree, and the witnesses did not agree. While the ecclesiastical authority could prosecute, only the civil power could inflict death, and the civil power vainly tried to wash its hands of the responsibility. The very rules of the feast told in favor of the prisoner. If the Jews would be defiled by entering Pilate's judgment-hall, there should have been a remand. But they who met in Jerusalem to seek mercy for themselves refused mercy to Him, and instead of delaying His fate, hurried it on, so twisting against Him the customs which—humanly speaking—might have helped Him. Even the dying thief, who railed against a cruel sentence, was moved by our Lord's patience to declare that the cross, though barbarous, is no more than a just penalty for sin, which, indeed, was the reason why Christ endured it. In Him, we thus learn that what we need is not a better law, for He vindicated Law, but a better heart—not legislation by Parliaments, but equity or righteousness within us. He was not slain because laws were bad, but because men were wicked. And His Gospel is not a reform of the penal code. It is salvation.

Arrested.

Jesus was wrongfully arrested. The proper time to seize an offender is when the offense is committed, or as soon afterwards as possible; and an offense which the State permits without protest is thereby condoned, nor should it be revived. He taught daily in the Temple, but they did not take Him. They had no right to seize Him in the Garden. For their sakes, lest they sin,—not for His own,—He told them so.

When the soldiers came toward Him, He gave Himself up willingly; and it was wrong, therefore, to bind His arms, as if He were a thief, like Judas, who, if caught, might escape from justice. That introduced prejudice into the case, and suggested that He must be guilty merely because He was in custody. Annas and Caiaphas sat as magistrates in a court of first instance, and it was their duty to protect His Person and His reputation until a plain indictment was submitted by the prosecution. Instead of doing this, Caiaphas questioned, not His accusers, who alone had, at that stage, to make out a case, but the Prisoner, not yet accused; and this examination was renewed before the Sanhedrin. Pilate threatened Him with torture, and did actually scourge Him, while Herod encouraged men to maltreat Him. During this ordeal, lasting many hours, Jesus was denied food and drink and sleep, and endured all and more than all that horrifies us in the rack and the thumb-screw. Yet His teaching, if obeyed, would have prevented these cruelties. We who are sinners, and need forgiveness, have no right to punish sin, as such, in others. It is only when sin becomes crime—that is, an offense against society, or "Cæsar," or one's "neighbor"—that we dare to judge it. Unless somebody else is injured, there can be no crime; and to prove a crime, there must be evidence other than the prisoner's own. No one suggested that Jesus and His disciples had injured anyone. Eager as His accusers were to make out a case, it is to be noted that they did not mention the loss of the Gadarene swine, the withered fig-tree, and the overturned tables of the money-changers, which were undoubtedly attacks on property. What they resented was His

more exacting claim on themselves—what He said and what He was, not what He did; His words, not His deeds. Thus unconsciously they subjected Him to the standard which He Himself set up when He said that in the day of judgment men must account for every jot and tittle that passes their lips.

First, Caiaphas wanted to know about His disciples, which was suggesting that He should turn king's evidence, as Judas did. Two disciples, Peter and John, were there, and we may imagine what they felt when they listened. Neither of them confessed Him before men, and this meant that He did not confess them. He mentioned no name of a disciple, for the time had not come when they would be proud to suffer with Him. Yet He made an appeal. For when the high priest went on to inquire about His doctrine, He told him to ask the men who had heard Him. "They knew it," He said. Peter and John were the very witnesses needed, and their testimony would have agreed; but they remained silent. It was the Spirit that came to them later which made them bold.

Suborned Witnesses.

In His reply to the accusations of the chief priests, there was no disrespect. He was right in saying that evidence should be called, and they knew it, for they sent detectives to gather the evidence. For months, *agents provocateurs* had tried to entangle Him in His talk, which again was wicked, because every criminal investigator should seek to prove innocence, if innocence be possible, rather than to suggest guilt. The detectives suborned witnesses, and the witnesses thus suborned shared the sin by saying many things,

indeed anything, that would help a zealous prosecution. The "Crown," as we call it, was rich; He was poor; but He was offered no legal assistance, nor during the investigation was He released on bail or surety, or permitted to consult His friends. He had no defense; He needed none, for, undefended, history has reverently acquitted Him.

The warders also sinned against Him. Though He had committed no contempt of court, one of them struck Him on the mouth a blow that was the first of many. Others blindfolded His eyes, and called on Him as Prophet to name the men who buffeted Him. He who had loosed men's tongues, opened their eyes, and restored their limbs, stood there dumb, blind, bound. And there rang out that laughter in court at His expense which is ever the most callous, the most cowardly merriment—such a spectacle was He whose voice now blesses us, whose eye now guides us, whose arm is not shortened that it cannot save. He did not curse them; He looked not upon their iniquity; He did not smite them; and the oblivion which enfolds them is the measure of His forgiveness.

The Sanhedrin assembled. It was the special or selected jury. In the street, the common jury was gathering. Both juries gave a verdict; equally unrighteous, since it condemned Christ without specifying the offense. Then, as often since, the course of justice was deflected by public opinion. The very domestic servants made Peter tremble. And Pilate's wife, who slept uneasily amid the growing tumult of those early morning hours, terrified the governor with her dreams. The trial involved all classes and both sexes. One nation instituted it; every nation helped to conduct it. And it tests every age—Truth

for ever on the scaffold; Wrong for ever on the throne.

The Accusation before Pilate.

The indictment, when framed at last, was frequently varied. Charged first with disrespect to the Temple, He was found guilty of blasphemy against God. But the accusation before Pilate was a refusal to pay tribute to Cæsar, and Pilate sentenced Him for claiming to be a King. Such proceedings were contrary to every canon of criminal jurisprudence, and all the diverse charges separately broke down.

So far from insulting the Temple, He twice cleansed it; and, in saying that He would rebuild it in three days, He referred to His body, the Living Temple, which was to die and rise again. It was no crime to declare that man, filled with God's Spirit, is greater than what he achieves.

The second charge was forced on Him by adjuration to God. Commanded to say if He was Messiah —the Son of Jehovah—He answered simply: Yes, and they would see Him return in power and glory. Assuming it false, they should have pitied the delusion. But the point is that they dared not so declare it. They did not in fact deny His Deity, they only hated Him the more for asserting it; and Caiaphas broke the law of his order—as laid down in the writings of Moses—by rending his clothes, as the veil of the Temple was to be rent, so in symbol abdicating his office, in presence of Him who is our great High Priest, eternal in the heavens.

As for tribute to Cæsar, what He said was the opposite of what they, who themselves revolted against the tribute, now alleged. He paid taxes, and told

others to pay them; while His claim to be King, though calmly admitted, satisfied even Pilate, who found no fault in One who only desired to rule the hearts and allay the passions of men by leading them into His realm of Truth—the frontiers of which Pilate regarded with doubt and cynicism. "To this end," said He, "I was born," and a birthright—be it royal or be it Divine—cannot be criminal, however often it is so treated.

Finally, it was illegal to inflict Roman crucifixion on Him, when His offense, as alleged, was Jewish, and therefore punishable only by stoning. Pilate knew this, and called on them to deal with Him by their law; but they refused to carry out the sentence for which they clamored. And in seeking to apply the last prerogative of mercy, Pilate himself gravely erred. The fate of one prisoner should not have been made dependent on the fate of another—that was contrary to law; and if the Prisoner was not guilty, as Pilate believed, His sentence of death should have been canceled outright, and not reduced to scourging. To compromise between guilt and innocence only lacerates the victim of injustice. Strict righteousness, hard though it be, is ever the truest mercy.

So that it came to this—without indictment, He was arrested. Without evidence, He was accused. Without verdict, guilty or not guilty, He was condemned. He was scourged because He was too good to be slain, yet afterwards He was slain. No one who demanded His death or saw Him die could say what evil He had done. And behind that contradiction of sinners lay a profounder meaning. That meaning was our redemption.

XXXIX

HE IS CRUCIFIED

Before Herod and Pilate—Son of Abbas, Son of God—Life out of Death.

THE palace of Herod at Jerusalem has vanished, and only lives in history because, during the Saviour's trial, it was visited once, for a few minutes, by the Lord of lords. It was the first and last time that He who preached the Gospel to the poor attended an earthly court; and though He was summoned as a Prisoner, it was He, and not Herod, who by silence granted "an audience" to the other. Here were Sovereigns, both of whom had reigned in Galilee; but how great the contrast—for He was the true King, who went about doing good; and it was because he followed "pomp and circumstance" that Herod missed the greater miracles of the Omnipotent. For so it has ever been. The powerful are too busy to take note of that Gospel which alone saves men. Indeed, the very gladness of this prince was blasphemy, for redemption is not offered to us as an amusement for the curious. A year or two earlier, the Baptist had said many things to Herod, and because these warnings were unheeded, therefore not one word was added unto them by the Lord Jesus. In an entourage

which rejected the Servant, there was no room for the Master's wisdom. And the only miracle that He granted was the sight of the Redeemer speechless in the dock, while a murderer sat talking on the throne. That, indeed, has aroused the reverent wonder of the ages.

Before Herod and Pilate.

Undesigned by man but predestined by God, Herod's very mockery was fraught with a meaning. Frivolously stepping from that throne, with its solemn responsibilities, he plunged into ribaldry, which act was in itself an abdication of his royal office, as what followed with the virtual accession of the Redeemer. With his guilty hands, Herod arrayed the King of Love in royal purple, that color which blends the blue of the sky, for Divinity, with red, as of blood, for humanity, and so shows forth His incarnate majesty. Thus robed, Herod sent Him back to Pilate, whose soldiers platted a crown, not of gold, as of wealth, nor of iron, as of force, but of thorns—the common thorn that torments all mankind—and they set it on His brow. There shone forth the glory of suffering as He bore it, and as we may bear it if we suffer with Him. They struck Him with a reed, as authority strikes Him to-day, yet they also put the reed in His hand. He did not seize it; He did not refuse it; and thus they foretold the end of things when all power will return to Him. They bowed the knee, as every knee will yet bow, and cried, as every voice will yet cry, "Hail, King of the Jews." Thus He was crowned, robed, sceptered—the Divine right of kingship conferred irrevocably on Him alone. Was ever ceremony, unrehearsed, so full of significance?

Pilate continued the pageant. Here was a man

who had seen Emperors in their glory, but no Emperor inspired within him the dread with which he regarded the unarmed and unresisting Son of God. On that devil's day, Jesus surrendered all command, except over Himself; but His rule over the Kingdom of God within Him was so absolute that, even as bound, He was proved Almighty. The Proconsul of Rome could only stand aside, like the Forerunner, and exclaim, "Behold the Man!" Crown and robe and scepter faded away in the nobler splendor of His personal kingliness.

Pilate only thought of saving the body of Jesus from death; Jesus would have rescued Pilate's soul. Lest there should be any mistake as to words, the Master explained precisely what was meant by His Kingdom—what the Jews knew that He meant; and Pilate, the man of force, was offered the Truth. Amid the turmoil, Jesus spoke as calmly as He did in the quiet of the night to Nicodemus. He betrayed no trace of excitement; and if, in humility, Pilate had asked, "What is truth?" he would have seen in Jesus the living Truth, and Rome would have worshiped. But the Governor had no allegiance to render to the Man whom, as he twice declared, he found faultless. In Pilate is revealed the deadly sin of cynicism, which recognizes good, and knows it to be good, but despises it. When next he appealed to the people, Pilate said not, "Behold *our* King," but "Behold *your* King," which meant that he deliberately refused his own allegiance, as many a statesman does to-day, holding that the Christ is a suitable Friend for the poor and ignorant, but that great ones on the earth can afford to look down on Him. Hence the only epitaph that Pilate would write was: "Jesus of

Nazareth—the King of the Jews," not of Romans, not of Greeks. By using the Latin and Greek languages as well as Hebrew, Pilate admitted the wider claim, only he would not bow to it. The Jews were logical in protesting that Pilate should say less or more. Either Jesus was an impostor or He was universal King, and of these alternatives they insisted on the first. Pilate did not change a syllable. What he wrote remained Rome's final judgment, and with it Rome fell. It had to be so. No Empire can assert a spiritual claim and then insult it without sowing the seeds of decay.

Any man who sneers at Truth must fail in Justice. Acquittal was our Redeemer's right. Pilate acknowledged it; but instead of granting it as a matter of course, he hesitated, spoke of it as a favor, and appealed to the pity of the mob, as if at any time there can be pity without righteousness. Terrible as was the scourging which Pilate inflicted, the crowds did not relent; and we see in them what reserves of cruelty lie hidden within man—how futile would be a Gospel based merely on sentiment. Indeed, after centuries of experience, there are women, nay, men also, who follow Him, not bravely, not in real sacrifice, but weeping, as if that were His will. "Weep not for Me," He said, "but for yourselves"; and this is still His message. He suffered when faith was green and living. An age comes when faith is dry and dead. The cruelty of the fanatic is terrible; but far more terrible is the cruelty of the skeptic. And when that cold, calculating ferocity bursts on the mothers and their children, they cry in vain for the hills to cover them. Their cry rings in our ears to-day, and He heard it first.

Son of Abbas, Son of God.

The very fact that Pilate asked Him whether He was the Son of God, meant, as Jesus answered, that he "said it." The Governor, seeing Him as Man and as Monarch, trembled at witnessing also His Divinity. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the dream of Pilate's wife furthered that most wholesome terror. But fear is not, in itself, enough. The Devil also can invoke that weapon; and when he was warned by the multitude that he could not release Jesus and remain Cæsar's friend, Pilate again hesitated. He had to decide between the Christ and the governing classes, and the exacting claims of public life gripped his soul. For, as the Jews instinctively realized, Pilate could not be just to the Christ without himself belonging to the Christ. It must be one thing or the other. Not that there is any real opposition of the Saviour and the State. On the contrary, our Master had declared that there is no conflict between the worship of God and the true service of Cæsar, and history has shown that Christ alone can establish Cæsar's empire in equity and peace.

The choice thus lay between Barabbas—son of Abbas—and Jesus, Son of God. Barabbas robbed the people and murdered them; but they preferred him, because it is easier to love what is lower than oneself, than to reach up to an example. To let loose the plunderer is a simpler affair than to bind him again; and since that day of decision, Barabbas has ever been abroad in the world. Between his getting and Christ's giving there can be no compromise; democracy may have the release of Jesus *or* of Barabbas, not of both. It was the populace that

chose. The State merely ratified the choice. And the nation received precisely what it deserved—Mammon, instead of God.

Life out of Death.

The Jews pronounced their own doom. To this day they have had, as they desired, no king but Cæsar. To this day His blood has been on them and their children. To this day the verdict, "Crucify Him," stands. Pilate handed Him over to the soldiers, and from that terrible moment His blessed Person has been broken for all mankind. They clad Him again in His own robe, which was still seamless and unrent, as if to remind us that after the final test of that morning His righteousness was perfect—His character was whole and consistent. Then they led Him forth. He was to suffer as criminals suffer, beyond the pale of society, outside the city walls, like the scapegoat driven from the camp into the wilderness—unclean, disgraced, ostracized. He was to die on Golgotha, the place of a skull, that grinning negation to the eye of a future life, where death glowered on Him with all its menaces, defying His resolution, challenging Him to withdraw before it was too late. This was the charnel-field where He won His victory, and what was to Him Golgotha is to us a place of Life, of Pardon, of Joy, of Power.

And He carried His cross. It was a brother-carpenter that had made it. When the weight bore Him down—it was His only display of physical exhaustion—it was not Simon Peter who came forward to bear the burden, but another Simon, of Cyrene, a stranger coming in from the country, who was compelled to assist Him. That service seems to have changed

Simon's life. We read that he was father of Alexander and Rufus—a man afterwards well known to the Church. Great was Simon's privilege, but accidental—Providential. But Peter—the absent Simon—was not forgotten. Not many days passed before he also was promised that he should not only carry his cross, but suffer on it, being crucified thus with Christ. And Peter was not so *compelled.* It was love and gratitude that alone constrained him.

XL

HE DIES

"By this Sign," Conquer — Christ and His Bible — "It is Finished."

THUS was His death-bed a cross of wood on which they laid Him, drawing His arms apart, as if He embraced the whole wide world, and revealing His very heart, which beats with love for men. East and West, North and South, so do His hands ever point, appealing thus to all that need Him. They nailed His hands and His feet, holding Him for ever, as they thought, in that attitude of shame. They offered Him wine, mingled with myrrh, but He refused it. No narcotic, no anæsthetic, was to cloud His intelligence, or ease His pain. He would satisfy Justice, not evoke pity—conquer Death, not compromise with death's agony. He would drink no wine, except new in His Kingdom, and not for Himself, but with His disciples. All that touched His parched lips was vinegar—the sweet turned sour—and this He only drank because it strengthened Him for final suffering, for a worse affliction even than thirst. It was by hyssop, the plant of Passover, that they raised the sponge to His face, putting hyssop and sponge on that kind of reed which had been His scepter; which meant that

without atonement for men's sins He could never reign over men's hearts. Simple indeed was His regalia—that hyssop His only laurel, that sponge His only chalice.

In anguish, as they pierced Him, His voice breathed a prayer, not for Himself, but for His torturers—that they, as sinners, might be pardoned. "Father," said He, "forgive them; for they know not what they do." It was the first of those sayings which, though distributed, as if casually, over the Four Gospels, yet, when collected, are found to be seven; the sacred and perfect number. In death, as in life, He was the complete Word of God to man, teaching forgiveness to soldiers, giving guidance to His mother, suggesting duty to John the beloved disciple, granting absolution to the thief, acknowledging God's stern righteousness by quoting the Crucifixion Psalm, confessing physical needs like thirst, and, finally, declaring His unaltered faith in His Heavenly Father. He who prayed could answer the sinner's prayer. He who was obedient even unto death could still command a disciple. He who was forsaken was able still to trust the Father who never forsakes us.

"By this Sign," Conquer.

They raised His cross until the dead wood pointed heavenwards, as it still points heavenwards in lands unknown to Judea. The wood was dead; but as He hung there it blossomed, like Aaron's rod, into all the loveliest virtues of love and peace and purity. From a symbol of disgrace, like the gallows, the Cross is to-day the sign by which we conquer. In the hilt of a sword, on the masts of our ships, on the flags under which we dwell, and the jewelry with which we are

adorned, in our hymns, over our graves, and above our churches, the Cross is ever an honored memorial.

As He prayed for their forgiveness, the day turned to darkness. It was the inevitable response of God to His plea. For three long hours, He whose eye sees all looked not on their offenses; and it meant that on the Saviour also no ray of light could shine. From that universal guilt of man, He, as Redeemer, could not be excluded; and He alone could bear the penalty, for He alone knew what penalty was due. As He had said, they in their iniquity were ignorant of what harm they did, since evil makes men blind to evil. For this reason they could only be forgiven because He suffered. As the people themselves said—Saving others, Himself He could not save. If His garments were of righteousness, then their removal from Him and His exposure meant, in symbol, that sin was imputed to Him. If He had sat as Judge, He ought to have smitten His persecutors. He could only—to use our phrase—"compound the felony" by Himself accepting the sentence which otherwise He must have pronounced.

No help came to Him. John stood there, but in this situation he was impotent. All he could do was to obey the Redeemer, and lead the weeping mother to his home. He who calls on us to forsake kindred for His sake, Himself made this sacrifice for our sake. Yet His providence did not waver. There *was* a home for the widow. There *was* a paradise for the thief. But let it not be forgotten that the widow, though ever worthy of tenderest reverence, took no part in His redemptive work. She was lovingly removed, and her tears are not associated with our salvation.

Christ and His Bible.

In those fearful hours, what occupied His mind was the Bible that He loved. Fortified in advance, He knew that it was no strange thing which had come upon Him. There, near Him, were the soldiers, as foretold, parting His garments among them, and casting lots for His raiment—of which raiment we hear nothing further. With supreme wisdom, it was dispersed. If the Apostles had retained it, the immediate effect would have been the institution of relic-worship. His cross has also gone, and the thorns from His brow. Nothing of His remains to us, except Himself; and material relics, whatever they are supposed to be, only obscure Him.

When He spoke, it was in the very words of the Psalmist—"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani." Not knowing the Scriptures, the multitudes misunderstood the Christ. He was not evoking Elijah to save Him. No prophet, no patriarch, no saint, however sacred, can redeem mankind; and, so far from Elijah saving Him (or us), He was Elijah's Saviour, as Elijah had testified. "My God, My God," was what He said, "why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Grave as are the words, I know not how to express it otherwise than by saying that it was the utterance of a Son, innocent Himself, yet disowned. No longer did He speak to "the Father," but to the All-just and Omnipotent One, then exacting punishment of Him who alone knew, because He alone shared, God's righteousness.

Those executions were not without priestly attendants, who wagged their heads and rendered no answer to His question *why* He was abandoned. No longer did they say, "This man is a sinner who deserves to

die." Yet, since He was not a sinner, the Master must have been suffering for others—to admit which would have been, for the priests, an act of repentance, a change of heart and mind. Where they were blind, the thief understood. He suddenly stopped his taunts, and rebuked his comrade, so confessing the Christ. And Jesus, forsaken Himself, did not forsake that new and solitary friend.

"It is Finished."

All Nature—the flowers, the wind, the rainbow, the fire—teaches of God; and so is it with darkness, which, invading the day, shadows forth His displeasure. Let us suppose that it was an eclipse of the sun—in itself a scientific certainty—the coincidence with His expiation would be none the less of a miracle; and, for Him, the gradual lifting of that black gloom was a Divine signal. As the light returned, He cried in triumph, loud above all turmoil, "It is finished." He, who did nothing by halves, paid the debt to the uttermost farthing, and in His heaven there is no night. "Father," He said, more gently, "into Thy hands I commend My spirit." His conscious Sonship was restored. He spoke no longer of "My God." The Father, the Son, and the Spirit returned, with His death, to their everlasting Tri-unity; and were included, as at His baptism, in one brief, sufficient utterance. God and man were reconciled.

Since His redeeming work was finished, He waited no longer for death. He did not endure pain merely for pain's sake, but "gave up the ghost"—which was His to give up; and while the thieves lived on, He hung there dead. Pilate marveled that He should die so quickly, and the soldiers also did not think that the

death was natural. Death itself proved Him Divine; and the Centurion who saw it, remembering His words to Pilate, declared: "Truly, this was the Son of God." The veil of the Temple was, like His flesh, rent from head to foot, and torn aside; the Holy of Holies in the Son of Man was revealed. His altars are now manifest to all. In His salvation there are no priestly secrets. A child can learn His oracles.

He had said that if they forbade the people to praise Him, the very stones would cry out. The mountains do not sin; and, less hard than men's hearts, they were rent asunder at His death, and an earthquake, as unforeseeable to science as an eclipse is calculable, rolled forth His dirge. It was the rock saluting the Rock of Ages—the dust worshiping Him who would never be dust.

The scoffs ceased. The crowds slunk away. The soldiers roughly brake the legs of the thieves and hastened their end. But Jesus was already dead, and not a bone of Him was broken. He rose again, not crippled or maimed, but all-powerful to help. One soldier plunged a spear into His side, piercing the heart, but even this outrage added to His glory. There came forth a cleansing and redeeming stream of blood and water, in fuller measure than from His hands and His feet—an abundant Atonement, not of service merely, but of a Love unto death.

XLI

THE STONE ROLLED AWAY

Setting a Watch—Joseph of Arimathea—Christ of the Past.

WHEN our Lord hung from the cross, dead, I doubt if there was one person on earth who believed that He would rise in power to share our daily lives. Hours after the resurrection occurred, Cleophas and his friend, walking out to Emmaus, argued as we argue over the evidence. When the women told the disciples that the tomb was empty, it seemed an idle tale. Mary Magdalene, even after seeing two angels in the sepulcher, thought that her Lord had been taken away. And for a whole week later Thomas himself was skeptical.

On the day of the crucifixion, the only people who thought seriously of His resurrection were the rulers who slew Him. Knowing positively that He was dead, they were uneasy in their triumph, and asked themselves whether this was really to be the end. As we read how they acted, we discover what He meant when He said, "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me." Having rejected the Messiah, these men, with all their theology and influence, became frankly "godless." In their perplexity, they did not pray—they sought no guidance from their Scriptures. They

had chosen Cæsar for their only king, and to Cæsar's deputy they turned, begging of Pilate soldiers to guard the tomb, lest the body be stolen away. It is truly amazing that Pilate doubted whether the entire forces of the Roman Empire would be sufficient to hold this Crucified Man. Before Christ died, he had said, "Know ye not that *I have power?*" Afterwards, he went no further than, "Make it *as sure as ye can.*" Even Pilate wondered about the future.

Setting a Watch.

Armed with this authority, the rulers sealed the stone before the sepulcher and set their guard. Through Friday night, Saturday, and into early Sunday morning, those men, doubtless relieved according to military routine, fulfilled sentry duty thereat. The usual civilian watch visited the place on their rounds. It was clearly explained to all whom it concerned that any attempt to break into the tomb would be made, if at all, on the third day, for He had prophesied that on the third day He would rise again. Yet soon after midnight, amid yet another earthquake, the Roman soldiers, actually more terrified, for some reason, than the watch itself, fled to the city. It was an offense punishable with death, but no charge of cowardice was advanced. On the contrary, the entire Sanhedrin was called together. The tribunal which decreed our Saviour's crucifixion solemnly denied His emergence from the tomb. And in the second case, as in the first, they rejected all compromise. Refusing the power of God, they had to assume a fraud by man; and to prove fraud, they had to perpetrate it. Before His death thirty pieces of

silver were enough to buy the betrayal of the Redeemer. But as He lay in the darkness of the tomb, His very foes began to perceive that His importance—what we call His glory—was growing, and likely to grow, among the nations. To slay Him a second time, not physically, but by spiritual, by intellectual poison, they voted "large money," and so endowed that destructive analysis of God's Good News to men which continues to this day. I like to think that, whereas before He died there was one Apostle ready to betray Him for so small a sum, after He had risen no offer of wealth, however lavish, seduced His followers from their allegiance.

So far from stealing away His blessed body, His Apostles did not even bury Him. The disciples of John the Baptist had laid that brave man's mutilated remains in a grave, now forgotten, and turned at once from the dead, however sacred, to Him who was the ever more-abundant Life. But with Jesus Himself thus slain, there was no one to whom Peter and John could go for hope, unless He came back again. They left Him on the cross, only watched by two or three women; and as we read of the mother of James and Joses standing there, we wonder why James and Joses were not there with them. It was doubtless a discouraging day for His Church, but that was no reason why, in that dark time, women alone should be worshipers. Yet, being there, they supplied an indispensable link in the chain of testimony to His triumph. They watched His body, with eyes of intense reverence, as He was carried from the cross to the tomb. And, with them thus faithful, it has never been suggested that His was other than a real funeral. They only left the tomb when the stone

was rolled into position, the seals affixed, and the guard set.

Joseph of Arimathea.

The faith of Nicodemus was still of the twilight, but he had already won for the Redeemer a friend in the Sanhedrin, Joseph of Arimathea—a man who was rich, highly educated, and right-minded. Joseph represents the silent rally to our Lord of the quiet and responsible elements in a nation—the Huguenots, the Puritans, the Evangelicals, the Jansenists; and according to his love, Joseph was rewarded. His view was that our Master was utterly good, but utterly impotent—an ideal, but unattainable; and that Pilate was still in complete authority over His stricken body. He did not tell Pilate that Jesus would rise again. He only begged of Pilate the permission to bury the precious remains. And it was actually Joseph's love and reverence that rolled the stone, which the rulers afterwards sealed, so separating the Redeemer from men, as happens to-day when the truly pious surround Him with traditions of their own, which the State afterwards fixes by Law and by Force.

Not knowing our Saviour's victory, but only His love and goodness, Joseph bought for Him fine linen, clean indeed as His righteousness, but designed for death, not life; for memory, not hope; for sorrow, not service. Yet his ministry was personal. He did not delegate to professionals this handling of the Dead, which the Pharisees had declared to be defilement of the Passover. Hardly conscious of what he was doing, Joseph was showing forth the truth that even in death God's Holy One could see no

corruption, and from his day onwards they who die in the Lord are pronounced clean.

Christ of the Past.

For Joseph was a man who lived under the constant shadow of the last enemy. He owned a garden full of flowers; he hewed therein a tomb of rock ready for himself. A tomb was therefore all that he had to offer to the Saviour, and he gave it freely. Nicodemus and Joseph, the unlooked-for witnesses of Christ, were not ignorant men, but trained and calculating statesmen. Unable to bring Him back again, they filled His tomb with spices, thereby instituting that kind of religion which lavishes wealth on worship, surrendering jewels, filling churches with incense, and devoting years to pilgrimages. If there had been no resurrection, the sepulcher would have become a kind of Mecca, where the Redeemer, lying dead, would have drawn the faithful, as Moslems to-day worship at the grave of their Prophet. The faith that we know would have been, as St. Paul tells us, "vain." Indeed, it would never have come into being.

The example of Joseph was rapidly followed by the holy women. They went home and, while keeping the Sabbath, found time to collect and prepare yet more spices. What they thought about was the Christ of the past, who could only be approached at certain seasons—not on the Sabbath—and in a certain place, which was a cemetery. So little did they believe in His power to remove mountains, founded by the Eternal Creator, that they were troubled about the stone which was so designed by man as to be rolled away. And they had to learn from an angel the

simple truth, still forgotten, that He is not here; He is not dead and gone, He is risen, gone before you into Galilee—the place not of death but of duty, of the old and unchanged duty, where alone we must expect to find Him. And when next we read of rich men and women bringing gifts, they were not spices for a tomb, but money, of common exchange, to be devoted, not to His altars, but to His poor. It was money laid, not in His sepulcher, but at the feet of His living Apostles.

About His uprising there was no haste, no confusion. Throughout the great day of the feast, He lay silent, a rebuke to the elaborate worship which was proceeding at Jerusalem, where men vainly endeavored to place above His one sacrifice for sin ceremonies which He had eternally fulfilled. And to the very end, He was perfect in obedience. He did not roll away the stone; it was an angel, one only of myriads, yet omnipotent when instructed by Omnipotence. Master of all flesh, He rose in solitude, none helping Him—instantly escaping from the napkin that He might see, and from the linen clothes that He might move forth, and arraying Himself gloriously in eternal garments. So He walked from the sepulcher, unattended; not annihilating the stone, but leaving the angel enthroned upon it; not rending the grave-clothes, but folding them in due order. Here was Christ the Historian, the Everlasting Truth of all that has happened. And the angel's countenance shone like lightning with His reflected glory.

XLII

FROM SIGHT TO FAITH

Women at the Sepulcher—The Confession of Thomas—Ascension into Heaven.

I COME now to the final scenes of our Lord's visible life on earth. It is not surprising that we sometimes fail to realize His presence among us, for His first disciples only believed in His resurrection when they saw Him face to face. Where other conquerors ride proudly through their defeated foes, He showed Himself only to those who loved Him, and then privately, "the doors being shut." The chief priests and scribes did not discern Him, nor did Pilate, nor Herod. And with Peter, who denied Him, and James His brother, who was so slow to believe on Him, there were interviews so secret that we know nothing of what abundant pardon He there granted. He also appeared to women, to the Apostles, to a company of five hundred, and to others, all of whom went forth into the world, not as logicians or as philosophers, not as clergy or as priests, but as eye-witnesses, "with the mighty ordination of His pierced hands." It was no fleeting vision. "He was seen of them constantly for forty days."

Women at the Sepulcher.

The women who first sought Him were the first to see Him. When they set forth, moved by the love that casteth out fear, the Sun of Righteousness had not risen, and it was still dark. These women were in no delusive ecstasy. After the emotions of the day of crucifixion, they had rested quietly throughout the Sabbath. On their way to the Sepulcher, they talked quite reasonably about the stone—how it was to be rolled away. On reaching the tomb, they found that the stone was removed—and at once each of them revealed her own personality. Mary of Magdala, emotional and excitable, hurried back to Peter and John. Her companions, of a more disciplined character, looked into the sepulcher, and saw the angel, without fright or flinching. He spoke calmly, bidding them leave the tomb, however sacred, and appeal to the Living Manhood of the race. In the splendor of that service, they forgot their spices; nor did they linger over the grave-clothes, though worthier of reverence than any relics since devised. In the amazement of these women there was no alloy of superstition or curiosity, and because they left the tomb, and all it still contained, therefore they saw the Living Christ. Worshiping Him as God, they held Him firmly by the feet, thus gripping His Humanity with His Deity, and hearing His very words, eternal, yet in their own language. He also, like the angel, sent them to the men who had drifted from Him, and especially to Peter with the contrite heart.

Summoned by Mary of Magdala, Peter and John ran to the tomb. Once more, let us notice how each, like the women, displayed his own individuality. John

was the better athlete, but Peter was bolder in spirit. As he plunged twice into the lake, so plunged he into the tomb, seeing the clothes neatly folded, with the napkin by itself, and he knew that no thief did it. Then and only then did John look into the sepulcher, and, there recognizing the escape of the Spiritual from the Material, he believed.

Mary of Magdala had now returned, and stood there weeping. To her intense personal love, it was terrible to think that her Lord was abroad in the world, unshielded from rough hands; and even when she saw two angels in the sepulcher, sitting where His head and feet had been lest any should approach and disturb His revealed evidences, she was not comforted. Christ risen was still to her a bereavement, when suddenly she turned round, and saw Him, there in the dim light of the dawn. So near was He, so actual to her sight, that she supposed Him to be the gardener. "Why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?" He had asked. It was only when He called her, as He always calls His own, by name, that she cried out, "Rabboni." Hers was faith at a word; and when she would have touched Him, falling back on physical aids to reverence, He forbade her, claiming not her fingers only, but her mind, and appealing from her impulses to her intelligence, by showing Himself as the Lord Christ who is not only risen, but will ascend to the Father, and will so dwell with us, not in body but by the Spirit. She henceforth must walk by faith.

Two disciples were going to Emmaus. They had before them all the evidence, past and present, which pointed to His resurrection; but this evidence, though conclusive as they summarized it, was not enough. Joining the two on their journey, He

"opened to them the Scriptures," until their hearts—so slow to believe—glowed within them. It was not Assyriology that kindled the flame, or research, but His living voice explaining the ancient Scriptures in terms of Himself. They besought Him to come in and dwell with them, not knowing who He was. To their hospitality, as to every good impulse, He responded; but it was not until He broke bread that they knew Him by His familiar actions. Risen, He was the same to-day as yesterday; and, so recognized, He vanished from their sight, though not from their hearts. Thus did they, like the others, learn to walk by faith alone; and their way led them back to Jerusalem, where were His still discouraged followers, fear in their souls.

The Confession of Thomas.

Not in excitement was He seen of them. His word was peace; it was the usual greeting, as we would say, "Good day, or God's day, be unto you," and as their gaze steadied, they found Him to be no phantom, but flesh and blood—a Man among men, who could eat a piece of a broiled fish and an honeycomb. Thomas was absent, and, like others, he doubted. Yet his will was towards the Redeemer, for seven days afterwards he rejoined the Apostles, and met the Lord, with the print of the nails in His hands and the wounds in His side, at which proofs that He was a Saviour who really died for sin, the Apostle cried, "My Lord and my God!" A noble confession, at once personal and universal. Yet happier still, said the Redeemer, are those who, not having seen, do in their souls believe. Once more it was faith transcending sight; and many years later, the Apostle Peter, writing to disciples

throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia—many of them the ancestors of the martyred Armenians of to-day—said, "*Whom, having not seen, ye love.*"

He said He would meet them in Galilee, the place of the old duties, and at His word they left Jerusalem and returned to the dull occupation of fishing. Journeying before them to the old trysting-place, He was watching them as they fruitlessly toiled, and His voice, though unrecognized, guided them even in their daily occupation. In the dimmest light, John knew the distant Christ and told Peter—who came to Him through the water, learning how He who wears our nature cares for us, even in material things like warmth and food. He did not condemn Peter's fishing—most of His disciples worked at a trade—but He recalled a higher duty than wage-earning: "Feed My sheep." Whatever be your business, be also a shepherd. Go forth, not once, nor twice, nor thrice, but as many times as in past years you have denied Him. And let your motive be, not a desire for advertisement or self-merit, but only His constraining, binding love.

To the last, they clung to His visible presence. They would talk to Him so freely that, as in the old days, they even asked Him when He would set up His Kingdom: but the Christ of special circumstances and special places had to lead them on to know Him as the Christ who fills the heaven of heavens, and is everywhere with us at every time. In His company, one day, they walked the familiar path to the Mount of Olives, His place for communion with the Father. So like was He unto His brethren, that the city there across the valley knew nothing of that farewell prog-

ress. Standing with them on the summit of all that is possible on earth, He could see the uplands around His cradle, the valley of His baptism, the wilderness of His temptation, the Temple of His rejection, the Calvary where He suffered, the Garden where He was in agony, and the sepulcher whence He rose from the dead. Once more, He could look abroad—north, south, east, and west—as from the high mountains of His teaching and His transfiguration, and we can almost see His gesture as He sweeps the horizon, with the Arm that saves, the Eye that sees, and cries: "Go *ye* into all the world, and tell the good news to every creature." To win the world with men and women, so weak, so full of sins—this was His astounding, His majestic enterprise.

Ascension into Heaven.

In a moment, the ignorant, the vacillating, the sorely tempted among obscure men and women were raised up for purposes which reach further than the dreams of statesmanship, of science, of conquest, and of the arts. Still clothed in man's flesh and blood, but supreme over all nature and her forces, He rose from the earth as from the tomb, unassisted by man or angel, and as He rose, "Behold," said He, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Not in the upper room alone would He visit us. Not on the road to Emmaus only would He accompany us. Not only by the lake-side of Gennesaret would He care for us. When thou passest through the waters, He will be with thee; and through the fire thou shalt not be burned. "I am with you always," was what He said; "the great I AM"—Jehovah, restored to men, not to the Jews alone, but to every

people, in every century. "Jehovah with us" meant "God with us"; the full circle was complete. At His ascension we return to the Emmanuel of His annunciation. The cloud received Him—the Cloud of God, known to Moses, known to Elijah, and bright with the veiled glory of the Eternal—the Shekinah Cloud—and He vanished out of their sight. But *only* out of their sight. Their faith held firm. They shed no tears. They put on no garments of mourning. And when two angels told them that they had looked long enough into heaven, that theirs was not to be a merely meditative piety, these men of Galilee—practical men, hard-handed and capable—walked back to Jerusalem, still noting that it was a Sabbath day's journey, as if this mattered; and our Lord Jesus, promising to come again in the clouds, began His ever-enlarging and ever-deepening work from above, which continues in the hearts of men and women and their children even unto this day.

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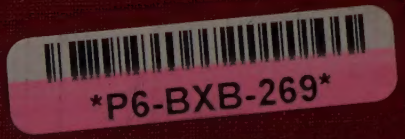
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